

## STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

**Class Title: Mental Health Technician**

**Class Code: 070341**

**Pay Grade: GG**

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### **A. Purpose:**

Provides personal care services for physical and psychosocial needs of patients in an institution for the physically and mentally handicapped and/or mentally ill; including therapy, individual and group education, training, leisure, and/or recreation sessions; and charting and reporting patient data for physically and mentally handicapped and mentally ill patients in an institution to provide necessary care and services to enable patients to maintain or improve their present level of functioning and well-being.

### **B. Distinguishing Feature:**

Mental Health Technician develops, conducts, and monitors education, training, counseling, leisure, and/or recreation programs prescribed by a treatment team; assists in implementing, assessing, revising, and documenting treatment plans; and provides feedback concerning patients responses, problems, and progress.

Mental Health Assistant provides assistance in unit management, which includes overseeing completion of patient care assignments, monitoring Mental Health Aides' compliance with policies and procedures, in addition to performing basic nursing care skills.

Mental Health Aide performs personal care services and provides care to adolescents, chemically dependent patients, acute patients, chronic patients, and geriatric/psychiatric patients; completes patient care assignments; provides an atmosphere conducive to treatment; documents and reports observations of patient behavior; reports when vital signs are not within normal limits; and decides when to initiate emergency codes and measures.

### **C. Functions:**

*(These are examples only; any one position may not include all of the listed examples nor do the listed examples include all functions which may be found in positions of this class.)*

1. Develops, organizes, schedules, and assists with therapy sessions and conducts individual and group therapy, education, training, leisure, and/or recreation sessions to deal constructively with patients' emotional, psychological, and behavioral problems.
  - a. Manages and maintains a schedule that may include all disciplines involved in programming.
  - b. Monitors and evaluates effectiveness of programming activities by gathering patient input and direct observation of individual and group sessions.
  - c. Creates forms for documenting programming activities.
  - d. Works with other disciplines in facilitating their programming activities.
  - e. Develops and maintains group curriculum for individual and group sessions.
  - f. Researches and develops ideas for new programming activities.
  - g. Seeks, encourages, and works with unit staff to use their education and talents to develop and lead individual and group sessions in areas of special interest.
2. Maintains and updates patients' progress records and prepares behavioral and assessment summary reports to provide accurate current information on patients' problems and progress on the unit and in specific therapy and programming activities.
  - a. Provides and implements an initial treatment plan for each patient within 72 hours of being admitted.
  - b. Meets with the patients to identify treatment needs and orient patients to unit programming groups and activities.

- c. Provides alternative plans for patients who are deemed inappropriate for typical groups offered.
  - d. Notifies the unit's night shift of the patients' group and activity schedules.
3. Confers with nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapeutic recreation specialists, social workers, and other staff and patients' families to provide current direct observation reports and information updates concerning patients' behavior and progress and to obtain pertinent data for revision or implementation of effective treatment plans for patients.
  4. Participates in meetings to provide input regarding the development and revision of patients' treatment plans to ensure most effective methods are employed to provide best treatment available to patients.
    - a. Provides case management duties to assist patients in achieving treatment plan goals.
    - b. Assists in meeting patient needs for clothing, money, family contacts, and etc.
  5. Monitors and modifies education, training, counseling, leisure, and/or recreation sessions as required to achieve desired changes in patients' behaviors and attitudes.
    - a. Assigns who will lead and/or co-lead groups.
    - b. Notifies unit staff of patients leaving the unit and/or the need to have staff present while presenting the group.
    - c. Takes attendance of those present, noting refusal, excused absences, and responses.
  6. Manages, schedules, and monitors programming activities and therapy and staff's duties to ensure that patients' personal care and emotional and psychosocial needs are met in a competent and efficient manner.
  7. Works with patients to develop skills or to provide improved personal care and hygiene.
    - a. Assists nursing staff with all aspects of direct patient care.
    - b. Follows patients' treatment plans and documents accordingly.
    - c. Responds to codes at the facility.
    - d. Escorts patients to various groups and appointments.
    - e. Identifies potential behavior and/or health concerns.
    - f. Maintains a safe and therapeutic patient environment.
  8. Performs other work as assigned.

#### **D. Reporting Relationships:**

Typically the incumbent does not supervise, but the incumbent will provide work direction to Mental Health Aides and Assistants.

#### **E. Challenges and Problems:**

Challenges include developing individual and group education, therapy, training, leisure, and/or recreation sessions that are effective in helping patients recover from their mental illness; effectively coordinating and conducting individual and group therapy sessions; individualize teaching and therapy methods to meet patient needs; accurately observe, assess, evaluate, and record patient behavior and data; utilize appropriate methods in dealing with patients' maladaptive or aggressive behaviors; teaching patients necessary skills to function in the environment; dealing with medical reactions; controlling potentially explosive patient situations; generating motivation and acceptance of responsibility in patients; providing emotional support; maintaining a positive and objective attitude; and acting as a role model and advocate for the patient.

## **F. Decision-making Authority:**

Decisions include determining education, training, leisure, and/or recreation equipment and materials used, scheduling training or counseling sessions, implementing care and treatment plans of patients, recording information determined pertinent to patient care, ensuring patient care duties are completed on shift, recommending revisions in care plan and new patient goals, dismissal of a disruptive patient from group, patients' appropriateness for specific groups, and what information to gather and how to expand groups from that information.

Decisions referred include approving any changes in treatment plans, treatment or counseling methods, determining need for and length of individual or group therapy or counseling, any disciplinary actions, and purchasing equipment and supplies.

## **G. Contact with Others:**

Daily contact with patients to provide training, counseling, individual and group education, leisure, and/or recreation and personal care services; psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and therapeutic recreation specialists, doctors, nurses, and therapists to determine best methods for dealing with patients and to provide updated information on patients' behavior; and with mental health aides and assistants to monitor patient care duties and share patient information. Occasional contact with patients' families to obtain information valuable to patient care and to provide feedback on patients' condition.

## **H. Working Conditions:**

The incumbent deals directly with mentally and physically disabled and mentally ill patients to provide education, training, counseling, leisure, and/or recreation sessions as well as personal care services. Heavy lifting is required in moving or repositioning patients. Verbal and physical abuse from violent patients is typical.

## **I. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:**

Knowledge of:

- basic theories and techniques used in psychosocial counseling and treatment programs for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped;
- hospital care routines and practices;
- patient's rights;
- policies and procedures for preventing injuries to patients, self, and others;
- the physical and psychosocial needs of hospitalized patients;
- charting, record keeping, and basic report writing;
- effective techniques of directing, monitoring, and training personnel.

Ability to:

- schedule, coordinate, and conduct planned treatment programs;
- apply methods and procedures which will safeguard the life and health of patients and others;
- interpret and follow established treatment plans, procedures, and policies;
- establish and maintain effective working relationships with patients, families, and staff;
- maintain records and prepare reports;
- communicate sufficient to relay patients' needs and behaviors to treatment team staff;
- lift and move patients;
- communicate information clearly and concisely.