

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Title: Youth Counselor

Class Code: 70620
Pay Grade: GH

A. Purpose:

Guides, counsels, and provides treatment to youths in a human services or correctional setting to assist them in gaining insight into their problems, finding workable solutions to those problems and improving their decision-making skills.

B. Distinguishing Feature:

The Youth Counselor conducts individual and group counseling sessions for adjudicated juveniles or adolescents who have mental health or developmental disability needs. The Youth Treatment Supervisor is responsible for the management and direction of the counseling and treatment programs for juveniles in a state treatment facility.

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 that may be found in positions of this class.)

1. Serves as a member of a treatment team which designs the treatment program for each youth to ensure the most effective methods of behavior modification or treatment are used.
 - a. Conducts the initial interview with each youth to determine psychological problems, family issues, personality type, level of maturity and willingness to accept treatment.
 - b. Reviews case histories, biographies, and other data pertaining to the youth in order to determine problems, their causes, and possible remedies.
2. Conducts one-on-one, group, and family counseling to enhance the youth's insight into his/her own problems, ability to get along with others, problem solving techniques, and behavior control.
 - a. Develops or works with multidisciplinary treatment teams to develop comprehensive case service plans designed to address the problems and meet desired objectives and goals for each youth.
 - b. Records each youth's progress by documenting individual and group counseling sessions, behavioral observations and completion of assignments.
 - c. Investigates family issues and home environment to evaluate whether an alternative living situation or continued out-of-home placement is needed.
3. Maintains physical custody of each assigned youth through direct supervision and accountability of activities to ensure each youth is protected from physical, emotional, sexual or psychological abuse or mistreatment.
 - a. Plans and supervises recreational, social, spiritual and daily living activities for youths.
 - b. Promotes positive interaction between youths.
 - c. Intervenes in disputes between youths, stops physical and verbal confrontations, and intervenes and deescalates crisis situations.
4. Provides information regarding each youth's needs to after care professionals such as Parole Agents, Juvenile Corrections Agents, Social Workers, school officials, and mental health providers to enhance the youth's chances of successfully assimilating into a less restrictive environment after incarceration or in-patient treatment.

5. Attends meetings with Youth Supervisors, other Youth Counselors, teachers, and treatment team members to formulate treatment plans, evaluate progress, discuss alternatives, determine discharge dates and placement options to ensure each youth is provided the best services possible to facilitate the modification of the behavior that led to incarceration or in-patient treatment.
6. Performs other work as assigned.

D. Reporting Relationships:

The Youth Counselor typically reports to a Youth Treatment Supervisor or a Developmental Disability Program Supervisor. May supervise or provide work direction to Youth Supervisors, Mental Health Aides, or Developmental Disability Technicians.

E. Challenges and Problems:

Challenged to get each youth to identify or recognize what is contributing to his or her problems or anti-social behavior and accept the corrective actions prescribed. This is often difficult because many youths do not accept responsibility for their actions, nor do they believe their actions are outside the norms of society. Another challenge is devising an effective treatment modality for each youth because of his or her diversity and level of acceptance of treatment.

Challenges in an inpatient psychiatric hospital or a developmental center include helping youths who are resistive to change resolve their issues and develop healthy communication and coping skills that will allow them to reintegrate successfully into a lesser restrictive environment. Also, challenging is educating youths and their families on their diagnosis and aiding them in developing the knowledge base and support system necessary for discharge.

Problems include determining what type and degree of punishment or confinement to impose or recommend when a youth will not comply with institutional rules or becomes uncontrollable; dealing with uncaring or uncooperative families; and determining whether a youth has accepted the treatment plan or is just going through the motions in order to satisfy the staff and win release.

F. Decision-making Authority:

Decisions include the content and format of counseling sessions, when to schedule one-on-one sessions, how to proceed with individual treatment plans, content of progress reports and discharge proposals, and when a treatment plan needs modification to better fit the needs of a youth.

Decisions referred to a supervisor include living area assignments, group assignments, final approval of discharge, hiring, policies, and operating procedures.

G. Contact with Others:

Timely contact with each youth's family to discuss progress in treatment and to schedule family counseling, and contact with court officials and law enforcement personnel to discuss aftercare plans and discharge. Contact with agencies, schools, and other community resources on an as needed basis.

H. Working Conditions:

Works in a juvenile corrections facility or human services facility and is subject to the risk of verbal abuse and physical harm.

I. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- the principles and procedures of adolescent development;
- counseling methods;
- principles of basic human behavior;
- special problems experienced by adolescents;
- methods of supervision of adolescents in an in-patient psychiatric treatment facility, a developmental center, or a juvenile corrections facility;
- CPR and first aid;
- Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NCI) techniques;
- medication administration;
- patient's rights;
- serious emotional disturbances.

Ability to:

- deal effectively with juveniles from diverse ethnic and sociological backgrounds;
- be a positive role model;
- observe and understand adolescent behavior;
- listen to and be empathetic with adolescents;
- accurately remember and recall information;
- maintain safety and security in an in-patient psychiatric, developmental center, or a juvenile corrections setting;
- counsel adolescents and their families;
- provide individual and/or group crisis and de-escalation counseling;
- lead adolescents in assigned tasks;
- effectively diffuse potentially explosive confrontations between adolescents;
- plan and organize work;
- relay information regarding adolescents behaviors and needs;
- understand adolescent behavior and help them formulate more acceptable responses to situations or problems that they encounter;
- maintain records and prepare reports;
- schedule, coordinate and conduct planned treatment programs;
- interpret and follow established policies, operations memoranda, procedures, and guidelines.