

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Title: Human Services Counselor

Class Code: 70710
Pay Grade: GH

A. Purpose:

Develops, implements and evaluates effective treatment for patients in a human services setting with severe and persistent mental illness and/or behavioral disturbances.

B. Distinguishing Feature:

The Human Services Counselor develops treatment plans and conducts individual and group counseling sessions for patients who have mental health needs.

The Youth Counselor conducts individual and group counseling sessions for adjudicated juveniles or adolescents who have mental health or developmental disability needs.

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 patient to ensure the most effective methods of behavior modification or treatment are used.
 - a. Actively participates in treatment team meetings and physician rounds.
 - b. Reviews case histories, biographies, and other data pertaining to patients in order to determine problems, their causes, and possible remedies.
 - c. Develops and implements appropriate therapeutic treatment modalities for patients across the lifespan.
 - d. Evaluates, monitors and provides input regarding the patient's individualized treatment and progress with both behavioral and pharmaceutical interventions.
 - e. Makes recommendations for changes and additions to the treatment plan direction.
2. Facilitates group and individual treatment sessions to provide insight into the patient's problems and advancement of treatment goals to ensure appropriate treatment.
 - a. Communicates therapeutically with patients.
 - b. Performs basic personal care, communication skills, listening skills and treatment interventions.
 - c. Facilitates treatment plan development regarding goals related to transfer or admission within the hospital or to a less restrictive environment.
 - d. Participates in discharge planning.
 - e. Guides patients during participation in treatment activities.
 - f. Consults with program and patient's home unit treatment team regarding appropriateness of transfers and admissions throughout the hospital.
 - g. Collaborates with the treatment team members to discuss patient progress and implementation of creative treatment methods.
 - h. Monitors the effectiveness of group work for each individual patient.
 - i. Records patient's progress by documenting individual and group counseling sessions and behavioral observations.

3. Develops a respectful working relationship between all levels of unit staff to ensure all work assignments necessary for patient care and programming are completed.
4. Monitors patient's behavior and psychiatric symptoms to ensure the safety of patients and staff.
 - a. Utilizes basic and advanced non-violent critical intervention.
 - b. Works with patients on behavioral de-escalation.
 - c. Maintains safety of the physical environment, including housekeeping and unit duties.
5. Maintains compliance with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services accreditation standards to ensure the Human Services Center maintains accreditation as an acute inpatient psychiatric treatment program.
6. Compiles and completes documentation and clinical paperwork to ensure accurate documentation of patient's treatment, behaviors and progress.
 - a. Reads and reviews patient charts.
 - b. Documents clinical progress of the patient towards meeting treatment goals.
 - c. Documents programming activities patients are involved with and their responses to the treatment activities offered.
7. Performs other work as assigned.

D. Reporting Relationships:

The Human Services Counselor typically reports to a Human Services Charge Nurse. Does not directly supervise, but may provide oversight and guidance to Mental Health Aides, Mental Health Assistants, and Mental Health Technicians as directed by the Charge Nurse and treatment team.

E. Challenges and Problems:

Challenged to develop unique therapeutic interventions for those patients who present challenging behaviors and to provide individualized care to patients with numerous problems with minimal staffing levels while maintaining an atmosphere conducive to treatment and safety; to develop unit activities and therapy sessions adaptable to the patients due to their mental illness symptoms and level of participation. Also challenged to meet deadlines.

Problems include complying with hospital policies in regards to completing written paperwork assignments while being actively involved in the unit programming and maintaining individual contact with each patient; and maintaining communication between units, treatment team, supportive services, the patient and the patient's guardian/family.

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 when a treatment plan needs modification to better fit the needs of a patient; formulating therapy assignments; assisting in identifying the treatment need of each patient while maintaining appropriate content of treatment plans, reviews and summaries; and in conjunction with the charge nurse and treatment team, assist in facilitating daily treatment programming needs for assigned patients.

Decisions referred to a supervisor include living area assignments, policies, operating procedures and recommendations for additional clinical referrals.

G. Contact with Others:

Daily contact with patients to provide treatment; treatment team and physicians to address treatment planning and evaluate progress and readiness for a less restrictive environment; and charge nurse and treatment team members in order to maintain communication on all areas of the unit. Contact with nurse managers, program directors and administrative staff to discuss things such as programmatic issues, 72 hour reviews and transfer arrangements on an as needed basis.

H. Working Conditions:

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

I. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- counseling methods;
- severe and persistent mental illness;
- principles of basic human behavior across the lifespan;
- therapeutic communication skills;
- CPR and first aid;
- Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NCI) techniques;
- medication administration;
- patient's rights;
- serious emotional disturbances.

Ability to:

- deal effectively with patients from diverse ethnic and sociological backgrounds;
- listen to and be empathetic with patients;
- accurately remember and recall information;
- maintain safety and security in an in-patient psychiatric or developmental center setting;
- counsel patients and their families;
- provide individual and/or group crisis and de-escalation counseling;
- lead patients in assigned tasks;
- effectively diffuse potentially explosive confrontations between patients;
- plan and organize work;
- relay information regarding patient's behaviors and needs;
- maintain records and prepare reports;
- schedule, coordinate and conduct planned treatment programs;
- interpret and follow established policies, operations memoranda, procedures, and guidelines.