

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Title: Mental Health Associate

Class Code: 070710
Pay Grade: GH

A. Purpose:

Implements and evaluates effective treatment in a human services setting for acutely ill patients with severe and persistent mental illness and/or behavioral disturbances.

B. Distinguishing Feature:

The Mental Health Associate works with acutely ill patients in individual and group settings who have mental health needs. Through observation and documentation the Mental Health Associate assists professional staff in implementing, assessing, revising, and documenting treatment plans; and provides feedback concerning patients' responses, problems, and progress.

The Mental Health Technician typically works in a psychiatric rehabilitation program to develop, conduct, and monitor education, training, counseling, leisure, and/or recreation programs prescribed by a treatment team; assist in implementing, assessing, revising, and documenting treatment plans; and provide feedback concerning patients' responses, problems, and progress.

The 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.

The 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 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. Evaluates, monitors, and provides input regarding the patient's individualized treatment and progress with behavioral interventions.
 - c. Makes recommendations for changes and additions to the treatment plan direction, under direction of professional staff.
 - d. Assists patients in developing coping skills necessary for discharge.
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. Participates in discharge planning.
 - d. Guides patients during participation in treatment activities.
 - e. Collaborates with the treatment team members to discuss patient progress and implementation of creative treatment methods.
 - f. Records patient's progress by documenting individual and group treatment 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 patients' 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 patients' 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:

Typically the Mental Health Associate 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 assist in implementing 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 adaptable to the patients due to their mental illness symptoms and level of participation; and to meet deadlines.

Additional challenges include 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 how to proceed with individual treatment plans, the content of progress reports, assisting in identifying the treatment needs of each patient while maintaining appropriate content of 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 professional staff and/or supervisor include living area assignments, policies, operating procedures, the content and format of counseling sessions, when to schedule one-on-one sessions, 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 supervisors and administrative staff to discuss 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:

- treatment methods;
- behavioral approaches to 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;
- patient's rights;
- behavioral approaches to serious emotional disturbances.
- crisis management

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 flexibility while ensuring safety and security in an in-patient psychiatric or developmental center setting;
- provide individual and/or group crisis and de-escalation interventions;
- 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.