

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANT

This class identifies paraprofessional positions in local mental health centers involved in outreach to promote public awareness of services available for the emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, or drug-addicted. Work may include some incidental transportation and/or some higher-level activity with socialization groups or on individual work, but the main emphasis is on outreach and information gathering. Work may entail being involved in gathering some initial intake information.

I. DIFFICULTY OF WORK:

Complexity - Work is limited in complexity, but requires a variety of tasks providing outreach services and promoting public awareness of the program. Major involvement is with families in low-income neighborhoods to inform them of available mental health services and community resources, encouraging them to see medical care, and explaining the procedures of the mental health center. Employee visits homes to find out why a patient missed an appointment; to observe home conditions; to talk with other family members about the status of the patient; and to report findings to the staff of the mental health center.

Guidelines - Work is performed within local policies and procedures. Instructions are clear and are normally given by a member of the treatment team. Employee would check with the professional before varying the services prescribed.

II. RESPONSIBILITY:

Consequence of Action - Work is with families in selected neighborhoods which have high incidence of untreated emotional disturbance, mental retardation, or drug-addiction and which lack motivation and proper understanding of problems. Actions contribute to public awareness of mental health and available community resources and provide supportive information to treatment team on home conditions and family relationships.

Review - Work is reviewed by treatment team or supervisor usually upon completion. Medical or clinical problems are referred to professionals.

Accountability - Outreach work reflects quality of local programs. In outreach, employee may be the prime means of creating understanding and utilization of agency services by tact exercised and information provided. Observations supplement information for team planning and treatment.

III. INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

Subject Matter - Frequent contact is required with emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, or drug-addicted persons who may lack motivation and proper understanding of problems which can further impede comprehension of services information.

Purpose - Varies from informing citizens who are unaware of local resources to encouraging clients by allaying fears of dispelling myths about treatment of mental illness or mental retardation, to observing home conditions for use by professionals in planning and treatment.

IV. WORK ENVIRONMENT:

Nature of Working Conditions - Work requires going in to poverty neighborhoods and with frequent visitation to homes of indigent families, clients who have additional mental or drug addiction problems.

Nature and Potential of Personal Hazards - Work requires occasional contact with clients who maybe hostile and in needs of medical attention which causes them to be verbally abusive to employee. Familiarity with clientele and exercise of tact decrease any potential of physical harm.

V. JOB REQUIREMENTS:

Knowledges, Skills, and Abilities - Basic knowledge of: the social, economic, and environmental conditions of clients served; gross characteristics of behavior of mental illness; and available community resources. Ability to relate to clientele in a supportive and therapeutic manner; to follow written and verbal directions; to record basic data and report findings verbally to supervisor; to exercise judgment in appraising home situations and to report findings to supervisor; and to represent agency effectively in community.

Minimum Education and Experience - Demonstrated possession of knowledges, skills, and abilities gained through at least one year of experience in performing similar supportive services to emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, or drug addicted patients.

Administering the Class - Graduation from a two-year associate degree program designed to prepare support personnel for the Human services field may start at the third step of the range. College graduates in home economics, psychology, child and family, sociology, or social work may start at the third step of the range. Applicants with two or more years of general college and one year of the above experience start at the first step of the range.