

COUNTY OF SOLANO

MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST I

Rev. 10/00

Under administrative supervision and technical direction of licensed staff and in a learning capacity, assists in the provision and coordination of mental health support counseling and rehabilitative treatment services for individuals and their families with mental, emotional and substance abuse problems; performs ongoing case management support for established cases; maintains records related to client services; and performs related duties as required.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

The Mental Health Specialist I is the entry level in this class series. Incumbents work under the supervision or direction of professional staff and assist in the performance of casework duties in providing supportive counseling, rehabilitative services, including training in the activities of daily living, identifying client needs, using community resources, assisting clients with immediate problems, and in client advocacy. Final disposition of cases is subject to review and approval by licensed supervisory and professional staff.

The work is characterized by the performance of para-professional casework of limited scope, difficulty, and complexity. The Mental Health Specialist I class is distinguished from the Mental Health Specialist II class in that the latter class requires greater independence of action, performance of the full range of duties, and broader participation in treatment team consultations.

EXAMPLES OF DUTIES

1. In accordance with established procedures and format, conducts initial interviews with clients and relatives to obtain and record information concerning medical, social history, and client's current mental condition.
2. Participates in individual and group supportive life skills counseling to enhance mental and emotional stability, level of social functioning and independent living utilizing a variety of support counseling modalities and social rehabilitation techniques.
3. Provides self-help information, education and services and may provide peer counseling and self-help services to mental health consumers.
4. Oversees and leads client recreational, educational and socialization activities, cares for patient client safety, and orients new clients in program requirements.
5. Implements established treatment plans; observes and records client's behavior to assure effectiveness of plan.
6. Refers or informs client of community services available and contacts these organizations on client's behalf.
7. Teaches clients independent living skills in such areas as public transportation, shopping, and appointment making.
8. Makes arrangements for care of clients and transportation of clients to other service providers.
9. On behalf of client, acts as liaison between relatives, guardians, employers, physicians, and other service providers.
10. Participates in treatment team conferences to assist in the development of treatment plans and in the provision of services.

EXAMPLES OF DUTIES, Continued

11. Assists in the preparation and revision of reports and correspondence and maintains a variety of documentation, such as charting observed behaviors, treatment plan objectives, progress reports, discharge summaries, incident reports, and other data.
12. Attends and participates in a variety of internal and external meetings such as daily treatment team report, clinical meetings, interdisciplinary case conferences, inter-agency meetings, etc.
13. Coordinates with caseworkers, probation officers, community and support services, and appropriate referrals for patients upon discharge; works with other agencies to obtain information, coordinate services, determine appropriate venue for service, provide training about mental illness, and related matters.
14. Assists clients with paperwork and enrollment procedures for various treatment and social support programs.
15. When certified through a “Management of Assaultive Behavior” course, may assist with physically controlling violent and/or combative clients, assists in maintaining safety and security of facilities.
16. May operate vehicles to transport patients between facilities or to perform field duties of monitoring service provision, working with patients or patient clients at other sites, and/or to coordinate with other agencies.
17. May function as a member of community outreach team to seek, contact and engage these consumers

TYPICAL PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Sit for extended periods; frequently stand and walk; sufficient manual dexterity to perform repetitive motion in various duties such as: keyboarding, writing, filing, reaching and grasping above shoulder level; normal eye-hand coordination; body strength sufficient to lift and carry case files; corrected vision to normal range to read fine print and computer screen; corrected hearing to speak and hear sufficiently to communicate clearly over the telephone and in person; ability to use office equipment including telephones, calculators, copiers, facsimile, computers, and other related peripheral equipment such as printers and scanners.

TYPICAL WORKING CONDITIONS

Work is performed both in community settings, client’s residence and an office environment and includes continuous contact with staff and the public; may be required to enter private homes to make family home visits for purpose of investigation; work may involve stressful situations and includes dealing with erratic and sometimes threatening behavior; may travel to community areas that are potentially dangerous.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Knowledge of:

- Social and psychological needs, problems, attitudes, behavior patterns, and basic counseling methods for children, adults and other patient clients with emotional disorders or psychiatric disabilities.
- Dynamics of human behavior.
- Availability of and procedures for obtaining a wide variety of community and governmental services and resources.
- Methods and techniques of interviewing.
- Principles of counseling including group facilitator functions.
- Fundamental understanding of psychiatric and psychosocial treatment plan development and implementation.
- Basic knowledge of medications and psychotropic drugs.
- Terminology of mental health services.
- Services and activities of public and private health and welfare agencies including referral sources and community resources.
- Basic techniques of rehabilitative counseling.
- Use of automated equipment and standard office support applications software related to the work.
- Drug and alcohol use/dependence and impact on psychiatric conditions.
- Methods and techniques of interviewing and crisis intervention.
- Impact of cultural, gender or socio-economical status on manifestations of emotional distress and mental illness.

Ability to:

- Assess patient client immediate needs and ensure patient client's receipt of needed services.
- Interview a variety of people with diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, temperaments, and mental capabilities.
- Recognize factors causing reaction or changes in patient client's condition or behavior.
- Make referrals to other providers of mental health services.
- Work in stressful, emotional and confrontational situations; respond with appropriate and professional conduct in crisis situations.
- Understand complex mental health technical materials and applicable laws, codes and regulations.
- Prepare complex and detailed reports and records and maintain confidentiality of information.
- Prepare appropriate case files, legal and clinical documentation.
- Communicate orally and in written format and interact in situations requiring instructional, persuasive, consultative, counseling and motivational skills.
- Provide training, guidance and consultation to other staff and family members.
- Assist in physically containing violent and/or combative clients.
- Deal effectively with patient clients of various ages and socio-economic and cultural groups including those with physical and/or emotional problems.

