

Advocacy Tools

Advocacy in Community Care Facilities

A large percentage of mental health clients reside in licensed board and care homes. Many of these clients are not well informed of their rights and may need advocacy assistance to protect those rights. Site visits prior to receiving complaints is a good way to educate the clients and the operator and to begin to build the relationships that you will need if problems/complaints come up.

Empowerment Resources #11

⚡ **TECHNICAL ADVISOR**

Although our first role is that of patients' rights advocate for residents, providing technical assistance to the board & care (B&C) operator will help you in establishing a working relationship within the B&C operator community. Using the advisory approach rather than the adversarial approach will benefit everyone. Many county patients' rights advocates have found that combining an advisory approach with site monitoring and responding to complaints has resulted in significant decrease in rights violations.

Invite your B&C operators to call you with questions.

Ask to attend training and meetings of operators so that you can introduce yourself and begin to build a working relationship.

COMMUNITY CARE LICENSING

Having a cooperative relationship with Community Care Licensing (CCL) is essential to your advocacy. This is the state agency that enforces licensing regulations. They can require an operator make changes or be given a fine and for very serious violations, they can remove a license to operate. Working with CCL can be a useful tool when a rights violation has come to your attention.

Making a few joint site visits with CCL can help you understand their role and gives you an opportunity to develop your skills on what to look for under Title 22 regulations.

⚡ STANDARDIZED HOUSE RULES

Having these rules can prevent confusion by residents, operators and staff. Many patients' rights programs have worked with the Board & Care community, consumers/survivors and residential care services to develop a handbook – poster with this agreed upon rules.

Suggest to your mental health director that a group come together to draft this rules, with you providing a technical advisory role, to assure rights are not violated.

Included is a example of House Rules.

⚡ COMPLAINT PROCESS

One of the more frustrating aspects of B&C advocacy is that sometimes residents are reluctant to substantiate a reported violation of rights or abuse. The B&C is their home and many worry about being asked to leave if they make a complaint. Another reason a client may be reluctant to complain can be staff or peer intimidation. Here again your relationship with the residents will help build rapport and the trust factor that is essential to the complaint process.

Visit the facility just to talk with residents.

Provide training to group concerning their rights and the availability of your assistance.

Try to interview clients away from the facility, possibly when they are at county mental health.

⚡ RIGHTS HANDBOOKS OR BROCHURE

Many counties or advocates have developed a brochure or handbook for residents explaining their rights and how to file a complaint. We have several examples if you would like them, contact us and we will fax or mail them to you.

