

What is Patient Advocacy?

California law requires each county to assign a Patients' Rights Advocate to promote and represent consumers' rights and interests. These aims are accomplished through direct assistance to consumers, through monitoring of the policies and practices of mental health programs and facilities and through training of mental health staff about the rights of mental health consumers.

What Rights Do Consumers of Mental Health Services Have?

Consumers of mental health services include children, adolescents, adults and older adults. They have the same rights and opportunities afforded other members of society. Psychiatric patients receiving treatment in a health facility have certain legal rights, which are guaranteed by state law and the U.S. Constitution. These rights are contained in the Handbook of Rights for Mental Health Patients. A copy of this handbook is given to each individual admitted to a health facility for mental health treatment.

What Are Patients' Rights Advocates?

Patients' Rights Advocates are staff members who function within the

county mental health system. They are assigned the responsibility for ensuring the statutory and constitutional rights of consumers of mental health services.

What Do Patients' Rights Advocates Do?

Advocates represent a consumer's interests *as defined by the consumer*, as long as those interests are within the bounds of the law and achievable within the resources of the advocate. Advocates do not determine what is in the client's "best interest." Rather, the advocate will discuss available options with the consumer. The advocate will then assist the consumer in making an informed choice.

What Services Do Patients' Rights Advocates Provide?

Patients' Rights Advocates provide the following services:

- [Complaint Resolution](#)

Patients' Rights Advocates receive and investigate complaints from recipients of mental health services or others acting on their behalf, and who reside in licensed health facilities, group homes or community care facilities. California law provides for the rights of voluntary and involuntary mental health patients treated in any health facility.

- [Information and Referral](#)

Patients' Rights Advocates provide information about the rights of patients in psychiatric facilities and about available services within the county that are related to patients' rights issues.

- [Certification Review Hearing Representation](#)

Patients' Rights Advocates are assigned to assist and represent patients in Certification Review Hearings. Patients who have been placed on a 14-day hold in psychiatric treatment facilities are entitled to a Certification Review Hearing to review the doctor's decision to treat a person involuntarily.

- [Capacity Hearing Representation](#)

Patients' Rights Advocates are assigned to assist and represent patients in Capacity Hearings. Patients who refuse medication during the involuntary treatment period can be forced to take medications if, after the Capacity Hearing it is determined that the patient does not have the capacity to refuse medication.

- [Monitoring for Compliance](#)

Patients' Rights Advocates monitor mental health facilities, services and programs for compliance with laws

and regulations. They also provide education about mental health law and patients' rights to providers of mental health services.

- **Notification of Rights**

Patients' Rights Advocates ensure that clients of mental health services in all licensed health facilities, group homes and community care facilities are notified of their rights. Patients' rights groups held in facilities, special discussion meetings and during client complaint process are all ways in which clients are able to learn about their rights.

We're Ready to Help!

The staff of the Office of Patients' Rights is available for information and questions about your rights as a consumer. If you need to discuss concerns about the rights of individuals receiving mental health treatment in a health facility, as stated in this brochure or in the handbook, please call:

PATIENTS' RIGHTS OFFICE

P.O. Box 7549
Riverside, CA 92513-7549

(951) 358-4600
(800) 350-0519

SE HABLA ESPAÑOL



Please visit us at:
www.rcdmh.org

This information is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact the Office of Patients' Rights at (951) 358-4600 or (800) 350-0519.

OFFICE OF PATIENTS' RIGHTS

If you are receiving voluntary or involuntary mental health services and have questions or would like to make a complaint about a possible violation of your rights, please contact a patients' right advocate:

P.O. Box 7549
Riverside, CA 92513-7549

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