

Psychiatric Social Workers in Legal Aid Services in Hospitals: Exploring Roles in Indian Context

Abstract

Mental health and legal problems are interlinked in many ways. People facing legal issues may develop mental health problems, and people with mental illness and family also face legal issues. In India, Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 gives provision for free legal aid services for the poor sections of society. Authors explain the roles of psychiatric social workers in legal aid services in hospitals. Social case work as a method of social work is suitable in legal aid services. Counseling, referrals, collateral contacts, advocacy and networking are major services from the social work perspective. Knowledge about laws and mental illness is essential for social workers to work in legal aid clinics (LACs).

Key words: Legal aid, mental health, clinical social work, social case work, law

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Introduction

Mental health and legal services have a reciprocal relationship. Mental ill health renders the sufferer and his family vulnerable to legal disputes. At the same time, prolonged and often bitter legal battles can be a precipitating factor for mental illness. Legal issues often become another factor in precipitating or maintaining the mental ill health in people with mental illness.

India is rightly acclaimed for achieving a flourishing constitutional order, presided over by an inventive and activist judiciary, aided by a proficient bar, supported by the state and cherished by the public. At the same time, the courts and tribunals, where ordinary Indians might go for remedy and protection, are beset with massive problems of delay, cost and ineffectiveness. Potential users avoid the courts, despite a long-standing reputation for litigiousness. The existing evidence suggests that Indians avail themselves of the courts at a low rate, and the rate appears to be falling.^[1]

India has passed Legal Services Authorities Act in 1987 to prevent human rights violation and to protect and promote human rights of its citizens.^[2] The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free legal services

to the weaker sections of the society.^[3] The Mental Health Act, 1987 also ensures the protection of human rights of people with mental illness and have provisions for the free legal aid.^[4] At a tertiary referral center for psychiatry, neurology and neurosurgery in South India, a free Legal Aid Clinic (LAC) was launched in collaboration with the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority (KSLSA) on January 15, 2011 under the provision of the act. This LAC can be accessed by not only the patient and family seeking treatment in the institute, but also can be utilized by the general public.^[4,5] A panel of highly committed lawyers deputed by the KSLSA with the support of the district judge constitutes the legal team in the clinic. Along with them, psychiatric social work (PSW) consultants, staff and trainees, and a forensic psychiatrist on call form the multi-disciplinary team responsible for providing services in this clinic.^[6]

In the legal aid services at the hospital, patients from the discipline of psychiatry, neurology and neurosurgery, and walk-in clients without any neuropsychiatric problem approach for help. The patients identified in the initial assessment requiring legal advice are also referred by the treating team members. It is observed that at times patients mention potential legal issues to their social worker/physician as they are developing, as opposed to waiting for a legal crisis to develop and approach a lawyer. In the last five years, which the clinic has been actively providing services, a total of 1337 clients have approached for various services. Patients availing health

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mandate of the community law and social work are weiser, "Law and the Social Worker," Jewish Social. Service sion in psychiatric, child welfare, and fam.Abstract. The relationship between law and social work is complex. . psychiatrist could lawfully disclose the content of his report on a detained.Forensic social workers typically use their legal expertise to work within court systems, community members, correctional officers, doctors, and psychiatrists on.Psychiatric Social Workers and How to Become One. Psychiatric social workers provide mental health services to individuals with high needs. They may perform psychotherapy and even diagnose mental illness. If the patient is involved in any legal procedures, the social worker may have a role in information gathering.Forensic social workers who work at psychiatric departments of hospitals tend . and in these cases forensic social workers inform victims of their legal options.Community services, e.g.. 0. Bail hostels. 0. Probation services. . Prisons. Forensic psychiatry patients, like other psychiatric patients, are looked after by.In , New York State enacted a two-tier licensing law for professional social workers, a license for psychologists to replace their prior title protection statute.Both forensic psychology and forensic social work offer positive solutions to society. areas directly related to the court system that include civil and family law.Forensic social work is the application of social work to questions and issues relating to law and legal systems. This specialty of the social work profession goes far beyond clinics and psychiatric hospitals.Social work is an academic discipline and profession that concerns itself with individuals, . one of the first social work books to incorporate law, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, and history; and William Beveridge, who created the social.Many of these legal issues are unsettled and may not apply to all situations. or a social worker providing therapy in a practice owned by the psychiatrist).Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law Online physical, or sexual abuse or neglect; and social service involvement.The Institute of Law, Psychiatry and Public Policy at the University of Virginia is an forensic psychology, forensic neuropsychology and forensic social work.Forensic psychology and forensic psychiatry are both careers in the criminal It is usually their work that is utilized in legal proceedings as a way to assess and.The Law and Psychiatry Program works with DMH to provide annual trainings for those Trainings in Forensic Mental Health for Community Service Providers.15, , moves that state's law from a permissive to a mandatory duty for mental health .. 7, , Provides that a physician, social worker, psychiatric nurse.

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