

# **Riverside County - Department of Mental Health**

## **Background**

The Department of Mental Health maintains a seventy-seven-bed Inpatient Treatment Facility (ITF) adjacent to Riverside General Hospital (RGH). The department operates under the license of RGH. In 1990, ITF moved from RGH to its present location.

Experienced managers were available to oversee employee department and productivity while ITF was in the same building at RGH. Once moved, new management was appointed but was not adequately prepared for managing the staff at the new facility. Increased use of registry personnel caused tension among staff, including reduction in the effectiveness of internal communications.

In 1995, a new management position was filled and significant changes were made. Some changes were reorganization of the ITF division and control of overtime.

## **Findings**

1. Proper county regulations were followed by management to reorganize and focus on certain goals. Those being, reduce overtime, eliminate use of registry nurses, and improve both written and verbal communications. There is considerable evidence that management is lacking in human relations skills and sensitivity to the employee. Insensitive remarks about individuals made in public, use of abusive language, and remarks bordering on sexual harassment resulted in low morale. These demonstrated the need for human relations training.
2. Riverside General Hospital will be moving to Moreno Valley in the future. Major concerns are transportation of patients, emergency response time and distance from ITF to the new site.
3. County vehicles and county computers have been used for personal purposes.
4. Annual employee performance evaluations, position reclassification and the filling of vacant positions are not accomplished expediently.
5. Nurses without supervisory training, experience or qualifications in accordance with county requirements are put in charge of units/wards.
6. There is no active or enforced alcohol and controlled-substance abuse program. Employees are being referred to the office of Employee Assistance. With extremely high stress levels combined with a charged atmosphere, the environment may contribute to alcohol and controlled-substance abuse along with the possibility for violence in the work place.
7. Grievance procedures often fail because involved parties do not follow schedules as outlined in the County of Riverside Memorandum of Understanding.

## **Recommendations**

Director of Mental Health:

1. Reduce overtime and the use of registry personnel. In addition, upper management to meet with and listen to employees' grievances and improve relations between nursing and social workers staff. Courses in management training are available from many sources.
2. Develop a working plan (including cost effectiveness) and communications before relocation of RGH to Moreno Valley.
3. Place decals on county vehicles and computer property as a deterrent, making it clear that misuse is against county regulations.
4. Monitor reclassification and filling vacant positions in accordance with Policy C-19. Monitor employee performance evaluations in accordance with Policy C-21 in a timely manner.
5. Ensure county procedures and supervisory appointment guidelines are followed in accordance with job description.
6. Activate reasonable alcohol and controlled-substance abuse training program for management personnel and initiate random testing.
7. Reduce time lapses in responding to grievances. Stay within schedules outlined in the County of Riverside Memorandum of Understanding.