

FAMILY ADVOCATE

Definition:

Under general direction of the Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Unit Supervisor, to advocate and represent family members of mental health clients; and to support and facilitate timely and informative interactions for family members with behavioral health providers.

Distinguishing Characteristics

This is a singleton classification position. Incumbents are expected to exercise good judgement with minimal supervision. The Family Advocate is required to provide family members with system advocacy for support persons of mental health clients. This position is responsible for providing information and support to family members to enhance their awareness and knowledge of mental illnesses; to encourage family members to effectively navigate the behavioral health and recovery services system; and to assist and promote family member(s) involvement in the treatment and recovery process.

Essential Functions:

- Advocates for family members as a group within the behavioral health and recovery services system; and provides information and support to family members interacting with the mental health system and the legal system.
- Informs family members of the various service options and provides assistance in locating community resources.
- Represents family members' issues to behavioral health and recovery services managers, supervisors and staff to enhance awareness and sensitivity regarding family member concerns.
- Trains and assists family members in developing skills to enable them to care for and effectively advocate for family member(s) receiving services.
- Provides training and information to behavioral health and recovery services staff and family members to facilitate family involvement in the treatment of the consumer.
- Provides input to the Director in the development of family member policy.
- Represents family interests on statewide committees and task forces.
- Advocates for the rights of individuals served by the Department.
- Represents the interests of individuals served or family members in grievance proceedings and other hearings.
- Performs community outreach and public speaking to increase public awareness on the impact of mental illness on families and the importance of family member involvement in mental health treatment.
- Remains knowledgeable of legislation which will impact the services provided to family members and consumers.
- Establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with family support groups. (i.e. National Alliance on Mental Illness).
- Performs basic typing and computer tasks; accesses, utilizes, and maintains electronic records and files, including an electronic medical record computer program.
- Performs other job related duties as required.

Employment Standards:

Completion of a Master's degree from an accredited college or university with a major in Psychology, Sociology, Counseling, Social Work or related field.

OR

A Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with a major in Psychology, Sociology, Human Services, Behavioral Science, Social Work or related field AND one (1) year of full time, paid experience working with the chronically mentally ill in a behavioral health and recovery services setting; If the degree is not in a related field, coursework must have included 12 semester or 16 quarter units in the behavioral sciences.

OR

Completion of sixty (60) semester or ninety (90) quarter units of course work from an accredited college or university AND three (3) years of full time, paid experience working with the chronically mentally ill in a behavioral health and recovery services setting.

OR

Possession of a valid license as a Psychiatric Technician or Vocational Nurse issued by the State of California AND three (3) years of full time, paid experience working with the chronically mentally ill in a behavioral health and recovery services setting.

OR

Any equivalent combination of education, training, and/or experience that has provided the necessary knowledge and skills.

Lived experience with mental health/substance use disorders is preferred.

Dependent upon assignment, applicants may be required to pass an extensive background investigation and be fingerprinted. Disqualification for felony, misdemeanor and traffic offenses will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Possession of a valid Class C California Driver's License is required upon appointment.

Knowledge of: laws, rules and regulations governing a public mental health agency and the delivery of services, civil commitment statutes and procedures as well as state and federal laws and regulations affecting recipients of mental health services; administrative and judicial due process and procedures; conservatorship processes; family and group dynamics, the characteristics of mental illness including the effects on the individuals served, the family and the community; advocacy ethics and principles; mental health community resources, and managed care and service delivery principles and procedures; office functions and procedures including basic computer skills and record keeping.

Ability to: Apply the laws, rules and regulations governing a public behavioral health and recovery services agency to specific situations; read and understand legislation and regulations; establish and maintain effective working relationships with families, co-workers, governmental agencies, and community representatives; communicate effectively verbally and in writing; make presentations; maintain confidential information; and prepare reports; utilize a personal computer and software; access, utilize and maintain electronic records and files.

A background check may be conducted for this classification.

All Kern County employees are designated "Disaster Service Workers" through state and local laws (CA Government Code Sec. 3100-3109 and Ordinance Code Title 2-Administration, Ch. 2.66 Emergency Services.) As Disaster Service Workers, all County employees are expected to remain at work, or to report for work as soon as practicable following a significant emergency or disaster.