

Why Advocacy?

People with mental illness may be vulnerable; uninformed about their rights; or inexperienced in exercising them. The South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) is committed to services that respect the rights, wishes and needs of each individual. In furtherance of this policy, there is a comprehensive, department-wide patient rights and advocacy program administered through the SC DMH Office of Client Advocacy.

What are the rights of people with mental illness?

People with mental illness have the same rights as any other citizen unless limited by a court or by law. These rights include all civil and legal rights, privileges or benefits guaranteed by the South Carolina and US Constitutions, federal or state statutes and administrative policies.

How can rights violations be prevented?

Rights violations can be prevented by providing education and information (concerning the rights of people with mental illness) to patients, staff, families and the public. Violations can also be prevented through monitoring programs for rights compliance.

What is the purpose of the SCDMH Client Advocacy Program?

The purpose of the Client Advocacy Program is to: (1) prevent rights violations; (2) advocate for the provision of quality of care in a humane environment; and (3) review, investigate and resolve rights complaints or issues.

How does the SCDMH Client Advocacy Program Work?

The Director of Client Advocacy is at the central office in Columbia. Each SCDMH inpatient hospital has an advocate assigned to the facility. Additionally, each mental health center has at least one patient advocate.

Advocates inform patients of SC DMH about their rights, help them speak for themselves or speak on their behalf. Advocates assist patients with complaints about rights and services and bring issues to DMH employees for resolution.

How are rights complaints or issues reviewed and resolved?

An assigned advocate will interview the patient, staff or others as necessary and review records, documents or policies. The advocate will then attempt to negotiate a satisfactory result on behalf of the patient. When center or facility advocates cannot resolve situations the facility or center director attempts resolution. When the director cannot reach a resolution the issue is referred to the SCDMH Director of Client Advocacy.



If you desire further information or assistance, contact the advocate assigned to your center or facility.

You may also contact the SCDMH Client Advocacy Program at:

**SCDMH Office of Client Advocacy
2414 Bull Street
PO Box 485
Columbia, SC 29202**

1-866-300-9330 Toll Free