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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### HUMAN RIGHTS AUTHORITY-SPRINGFIELD REGION

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Report 24-050-9010  
Packard Mental Health Center

#### INTRODUCTION

The Human Rights Authority (HRA) opened an investigation after receiving a complaint of potential rights violations at Packard Mental Health Center, a Department of Human Services hospital in Springfield that treats adults in civil and forensic programs. The allegation is that a patient's right to communicate with peers on Monroe Hall was inappropriately restricted. Substantiated findings would violate protections under the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (405 ILCS 5).

The HRA met with facility administrators and Monroe Hall staff to discuss the matter. There were no relatable policies or records to review in this case. This forensic-status patient has resided on several units at Packard, forensic and civil, since 2018. Monroe Hall is a civil unit.

#### COMPLAINT SUMMARY

The complaint stated that in early 2024, Monroe staff discussed during a treatment team meeting that they wanted the patient separated from peers on the unit and that through the spring of that year, various ones were either scolded or prevented from talking to him; a particular nurse "getting in the faces" of those who would not comply. It was also alleged that the patient's transfer from Monroe to another unit at this same time was intended to complete that separation. Later that summer, a social worker reportedly yelled at the patient for trying to talk to a Monroe patient through an outside window, "You are not allowed to talk to patients on Monroe Hall."

#### FINDINGS

We spoke with staff from Monroe who were specifically named in the complaint. They said there were no communication restrictions in place for this patient and insisted that there was no treatment team discussion on separating him from his unit peers. They denied telling him he could not talk with other patients and vice versa. They also denied hanging up phones, getting into patients' faces whenever they talked to him or attempting to intervene or physically block anyone from trying to talk to him. They believed the patient had a peculiar focus on approaching

young female peers with intellectual disabilities or limitations, but that was no reason for restricting communications with them. And, regarding his unit transfer, that was done to help free up much needed civil beds and to accommodate a contracted therapy group that would not provide services on Monroe unless there were no forensic patients.

We followed up with several Monroe patients whose names were provided in the complaint as examples of prohibited communication.

-Patient 1: two attempts to speak with this person were made, and both times she hung up when the purpose of the call was explained.

-Patient 2: this patient identified a nurse and another unit staff person who yelled at her for talking to the subject on the phone, but she was unable to say when or how many times this occurred. She did not recall ever being physically blocked from approaching the patient in person. (During this phone conversation, a staff person approached Patient 2 and asked who she was talking to, and she was left alone when she told them Guardianship and Advocacy. She was on no phone restrictions at the time).

-Patient 3: we were unable to speak with this patient since she was transferred to another unit, and then discharged.

-Patient 4: this patient had been discharged.

-Patient 5: this patient had been discharged as well, but we were able to reach him. He said that staff would not put him through to the subject when he tried calling him after his discharge. He was unable to say who the staff person was or when this happened.

We also followed up via administration on the reported social worker incident, where she yelled at the patient that he was not allowed to talk to Monroe patients, and the social worker denied this happened. The Quality Manager asserted again, that this patient was not restricted from communicating with his peers on Monroe.

## CONCLUSION

Under the Mental Health Code,

“Except as provided in this Section, a recipient who resides in a mental health or developmental disabilities facility shall be permitted unimpeded, private, and uncensored communication with persons of his choice by mail, telephone and visitation. .... Unimpeded, private and uncensored communication by mail, telephone, and visitation may be reasonably restricted by the facility director only in order to protect the recipient or others from harm, harassment or intimidation....”

(405 ILCS 5/2-103).

Although the complaint offered several, very specific examples of interference, the HRA was unable to find factual evidence to verify them. Two patients spoke of their experiences being restricted from the patient, but their recollections were incomplete. While the complaint is not discredited, a violation is unsubstantiated.

#### SUGGESTION

Please remind staff to stop interrogating patients about their phone calls, which are to be unimpeded, private and uncensored.

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#### RESPONSE

**Notice: The following page(s) contain the provider response. Due to technical requirements, some provider responses appear verbatim in retyped format.**

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