

<b>ISSUE DATE</b> <b>1/5/2009</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b> <b>1/5/2009</b>	<b>NUMBER</b> <b>SMH-P-09-01</b>
--------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

**SUBJECT**  
**Inclusion of External Advocates in Hospital Administrative Investigations**

**BY:**  
  
Aidan Altener  
Bureau of Community and Hospital Operations

**PURPOSE:**

This policy provides a procedure to involve external advocates at State Mental Health Hospitals and South Mountain Restoration Center in Abuse Investigations to ensure the integrity of the process, and ensure that the outcome of the investigation is communicated to the individual consumer.

**SCOPE:**

State Mental Health Hospitals and South Mountain Restoration Center

**BACKGROUND:**

Assertive client advocacy has assisted hospital managers to create an environment that fosters patient dignity and choice by eliminating rules and regulations that are not essential to an individual's safety or recovery.

In July 2004, full time external advocates had been assigned to each Pennsylvania state hospital to improve the quality of patient's life. Since inception of the Client's Rights Program in the 1970s, independent advocates, have mediated patient/staff disagreements, trained patients and staff in rights related issues, assisted in the resolution of complaints and grievances and served as consultants.

In early 1998, client advocates were appointed to each hospital's executive staff council where they are able to participate in all decisions affecting hospital management and protect consumers' interest. In this role, they have assisted Pennsylvania in identifying and eliminating policies and practices that negatively affect a patient's recovery. As business partners under contract with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), external advocates are required to adhere to the same standards as any OMHSAS employee thereby reaffirming confidentiality by all external advocates in all matters associated with the administrative investigation.

**Procedure:**

- A. External Advocates shall be notified of the initiation of an Administrative Investigation.
- B. The completed investigation shall be shared with the External Advocate.
- C. Prior to the determination of the investigation the External Advocate shall be given the opportunity to review and comment on the completed investigation.

Cross Reference: Pennsylvania Code, Title 55, Chapter 5100, Mental Health Procedures OMH-92-07 Policy and Guidelines for Insuring the Protection of Patient Rights SMH-01-03 Procedures for Client Rights, Grievances and Appeals.

**COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS POLICY SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:**

The Bureau of Community and Hospital Operations at 717-705-8152, P.O. Box 2675, Harrisburg PA 17105.

Visit the Department of Public Welfare Web site at [www.dpw.state.pa.us](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us)