

Abstract

The study on “The Role of Psychiatric Social Workers in Protecting the Rights of Psychiatric Patients” aims at examining the role, nature, and ways of practice in protecting the rights of psychiatric patients, as well as problems and obstacles encountered both at micro and macro levels. It is a qualitative study collecting data through constructed indepth interviews from 10 psychiatric social workers of Chaopraya Institute of Psychiatry, Galya Rajanakarindra Institute, Srithanya Hospital, and Yuwaprasat Waithayopatham Child Psychiatric Hospital, plus a study of 10 cases on social workers’ role in the protection of patients’ rights. The analysis is based on the facts while presentation of the study is descriptive.

The study finds that the majority of the sampling group are females aged between 26-59 years, graduated with bachelor’s and master’s degree which are mostly Bachelor’s Degree of Social Work. They consist of administrators and practitioners working directly with psychiatric patients for 2-37 years. In addition, they also work with families, groups, communities and social agencies, plus the promotion of psychiatric social work profession.

Social workers’ problems and obstacles in the process of promoting, defending, soliciting and campaigning for the rights of psychiatric patients are caused by the lack of precise policy of the agencies concerned. Most importantly government agencies as well as private agencies and people at large do not recognize the importance of the protection of psychiatric patients’ rights while the budget allocation is insufficient. One observation is that psychiatric social workers do not have any problem in advising or presenting ideas to those concerned. However, it is found from the 10 case studies that the protection of psychiatric patients are largely the protection of rights of the wanderers, and of victims of violence, as well as the response to patients’ needs and violation of patients’ rights.

The study recommends that to make the psychiatric social workers’ role outstanding, they should strengthen their role by working with those who share the same ideal and have courage to protect the rights of psychiatric patients, and by adjusting the

work to current situation. The administrations and personnel of the agencies concerned should recognize the importance of psychiatric patients' rights. Especially government agencies should have clear and practical policy as well as administration and operation procedures to take good care of such rights, promote recognition and participation in the protection process by all parties concerned, provide sufficient budget, and support earnestly the work of psychiatric social workers.