

**STATE OF ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
ALTON MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

Date: May 15, 2009

Memo To: Medical Students

From: Asif Qaisrani, M.D., Medical Director

Subject: **Alton Mental Health Center - Psychiatry Clerkship**

We look forward to you coming to Alton Mental Health Center and want to provide you with some information about us and the facility where you will be performing your Psychiatry Clerkship. Alton Mental Health Center is one of the state hospitals serving both a civil and forensic patient population. There are 110 forensic beds in a separate main building and about 20 beds on the civil unit, called Locust. There are five forensic units. Units A-1 and A-2 serve male patients who have been found unfit to stand trial (UST). Unit B serves female patients who may be UST or NGRI, and may also have an MI/MR diagnosis (i.e. they have mental illness and mental retardation). Unit C-1 serves a male MI/MR population, and Unit C-2 serves a male NGRI population.

Overall, the forensic patients carry a wide variety of psychiatric conditions with varying intensity and chronicity. Hence, you can expect a rich learning experience during your stay with us. You will be assigned to the main forensic building. If you have a particular interest in a certain patient population, please let us know, and we can try to arrange some experience on a particular unit. Depending upon your interest, either you will rotate on different units or stay at one unit through the entire time. The patient population you will have the most exposure to will be based on whom your assigned supervisor will be. That is usually determined shortly before your arrival and based on the schedules of the psychiatrist.

Forensic patients are admitted either because they have been found incompetent to stand trial or are not guilty by reason of insanity. In the former instance, the goal of the treatment is to restore the patient to "fitness" to stand trial; i.e., treat their mental illness to the point that they understand court procedures and can help their attorney in their own defense. In the latter instance, the patient has already been to trial and been found not guilty by reason of insanity (NGRI). The goal of treatment is to return them to the community or a less secure setting. Your supervisor can explain these concepts to you in more detail when you get to Alton. The main focus during the rotation will be to provide you optimal exposure to general psychiatry. However, forensic psychiatry may be an additional facet of your learning interests.

When you get here you will be assigned a supervisor who is a Board Certified psychiatrist and part of Clinical Faculty at Department of Psychiatry, SIU School of Medicine. You will meet with your assigned supervisor daily and your schedule will be established between the two of you. You will also have a tutor who may be a psychiatrist or a psychologist. You will meet with your tutor at least weekly, and the focus of your meetings is usually the topics you are going to be tested on in the clerkship. In addition, the Medical Director will facilitate

your didactic experience. He will arrange your exposure to Journal Club and to Psychopharmacology. This may entail onsite learning from him or via Video Link to main SIU campus.

If you choose to stay on campus, there is a ranch style old house available, which you will share with other on-call physicians (separate bedrooms, of course). This house has certain historic value and sits in a beautiful natural landscape. There is a television with no cable and only local stations available. However, you may want to make available a DVD player. There is a microwave and refrigerator. You are free to use the flatware and utensils or bring your own. You would be expected to do your own dishes and cleaning. The staff at House Keeping will assist to keep the place tidy. The house, called Aspen, does not provide resort or hotel like amenities but can be an exciting experience for someone who likes to enjoy nature. There is access to the internet, but only from one room.

So that you don't miss us as you are driving on Highway 40 past the town of Bethalto, be aware of some landmarks. On your right you will see a sign that says "Welcome to Riverbend." Beyond that you should see what looks like a smoke-stack. That is part of the campus, and the right turn into the campus will be imminent. There are a number of red brick buildings as you enter. You are able to see the Forensic Center, which is a newer brick building with a green roof and surrounding fence, from the highway as well. If you get into town, you have gone too far.

Once you have turned into the campus, look for signs for "Alton Forensic Center" or "AFC." These should lead you to the newer brick building with the green roof and surrounding fence. There is a parking lot in which you may park. Enter the front entrance and inform the staff at "Control" (an elevated, glass enclosed area with monitors almost immediately inside the foyer) that you are a medical student and have to find the Medical Director's Office. Someone will come and escort you back through security doors into the building. You will sign a few papers (emergency contacts, expectations, etc.), you will be informed of whom your supervisor and tutor will be, and then you will be directed to the training department. For the first day and a few hours the next morning you will be in training; a requirement of our hospital prior to entering patient units. After that you will be introduced to your supervisor. The Medical Director will meet with you once a week as well.

Your key contact will be Cindi Lee, the executive assistant to the Medical Director. She will put you in contact with whom you need to meet at Alton, keep you in contact with SIU-SOM, and schedule meetings with the Medical Director.

We look forward to seeing you, and please call with any questions and to let us know what time you will be here (618-474-3469).

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