

Practice Standards

December, 2012

Section XVI, Representation of a Minor Voluntarily Committed to a Mental Health Facility

1. TRAINING AND COMPETENCY:

A. A public defender assigned to represent minors who have been voluntarily admitted to mental health services under §53-21-112, MCA, shall have a thorough understanding of involuntary commitment case law, statutes, and rules, as well as the mental health system.

B. To be eligible for assignment to represent minors who have been voluntarily admitted, counsel shall demonstrate proficiency or receive training in the duties, skills, and ethics of representing involuntary commitment respondents, including visits to a variety of youth treatment facilities if appropriate. Counsel shall utilize training and support provided by the Office of the State Public Defender.

C. Counsel shall be familiar with the public defender standards for representation of a respondent in a proceeding for involuntary commitment.

D. Counsel shall have basic knowledge of the classification of mental disorders and the ability to read and understand medical terminology related to mental disorders, developmental disabilities, alcoholism, and chemical dependency. Counsel shall be familiar with the medications used to treat mental disorders, developmental disabilities, alcoholism, and chemical dependency. Counsel shall be aware of how the minor's age, or a particular mental disorder, developmental disability, alcoholism, or chemical dependency will affect attorney-client communications and should recognize that communications may require special efforts on the part of counsel.