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Social workers and involuntary treatment in mental health

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Abstract

Involuntary treatment is often a reality in mental health social work. The current research examined 330 mental health social workers' involvement in and opinions about involuntary treatment as part of their primary job functions. Varieties of involuntary intervention and typical frequency were investigated. The most often cited areas of involuntary treatment experience proved to be mandated outpatient counseling and emergency hospitalization. In general, participants reported a high level of support for the existence of involuntary intervention, both in "idea" and "implementation." The study also explored the attitudes social workers have about these sometimes "ethically-complex" social work interventions and how these attitudes may have changed over the life of their practice careers due to practice experience and personal growth, job changes, and exposure to the reality of mental illness.

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