Jennifer Gamez  
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Jamaica Plain, MA  
Unit: South 3  

Arbour Hospital (Jamaica Plain) is a psychiatric facility, consisting of 118 inpatient beds. State-wide, Arbour Hospital is known as the largest behavioral health system.

Mental Health Associate

What does a mental health associate do?

Good question! In very simple terms, a mental health associate (MHA) works directly with patients who suffer from psychosis and supports them with daily living. An MHA has a variety of responsibilities including, but not limited to:

1. Monitoring patient safety  
2. Serving meals  
3. Leading therapeutic groups & activities on the weekends  
4. Admitting patients (paperwork & security search)  
5. Observe and oversee 6 assigned patients daily; including, writing progress notes.  
6. Supporting patients in identifying and using coping skills

Pre-Coop

What skills should I be familiar with before I become an expert MHA?

• Some familiarity with mental health illness  
• Ability to think critically  
• Empathetic  
• Great listening skills  
• Fast learner

Handy Tip: The position can sound a little scary. Do not let it stop you from applying. Focus on learning as much & as quickly as possible. I had no experience when I applied!
Training

MHAs play a critical role in Arbour’s mission of providing accessible & quality care to all patients. To play such a role, training is key & a must!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing regulations, confidential policies &amp; patient rights</td>
<td>Monday-Thurs: Trainees will rotate, spending one day on each unit (South 1, North &amp; South 2, 3)</td>
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<td>Learning codes &amp; procedures. This includes fire exits, how to intervene during a physical altercation &amp; restraint</td>
<td>Shadow current MHAs. After a day of shadowing, trainees are given assignments while current MHAs supervise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutorial on how to use Avenues, Arbour’s technical server. Practice using safety checks &amp; patient identification on the system</td>
<td>Friday: Trainees will become CPI certified. He or she will be taught methods and skills in managing unsafe and assaultive behavior</td>
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Innovation

As a MHA, you will encounter different personalities & emotions throughout the day. It is important to be innovative and adapt to these conditions, especially when working with patients who have psychosis. As a hospital & team, we have to consistently adapt & create treatment plans that best address the patient’s disorder & needs. Without growth, Arbour would not be stabilizing patients.

Company Culture

Arbour Hospital enforces strict policies & regulations in order to maintain a safe environment for not only patients but staff as well. Regardless of the pressure the culture is fun & exciting!

- Professional Attire: Monday –Thursday
- Team oriented
- Everyone works every other weekend, 5 shifts a week
- Patients love to interact & engage in activities with staff

Personal Development

I was hesitant to become a MHA, due to having no previous coop or psych experience. My motivation was the direct interaction with patients. Arbour offered me that as well as the opportunity to grow. I coordinated & led various therapy groups; realizing it was the right fit for me. It challenged me to think outside the box & create new ways for patients to express themselves. Through this growth, I learned to be very patient, more empathic, listen carefully & make no assumptions; skills I hope to use in my interactions during my next coop. By continuing to improve on my assertiveness & stress management, I will be a better leader when working with patients.

Post-Coop

What skills have I developed through my experience?

Due to direct interaction & first-hand experience, many skills are either obtained and/or improved.

1. Chart composing & reading
2. Stress management
3. A LOT of patience
4. A level of comprehension of mentally ill patients
5. Problem solving skills
6. Time management
7. Familiarized with clinical terms & practices