

My name is Debra L Morse Little, RN and I have been a nurse since 1991. I came to Oregon State Hospital as a Travel Nurse in May of 2006. I have been an RN of Oregon State Hospital since January of 2009. As an RN one of the most important parts of my job is to do everything I can to maintain a safe environment for my patients and staff. For a long time I have been bothered by the fact that a patient faces no consequences for behaviors which would be considered illegal outside of the hospital. A patient who has been at the hospital awhile no longer has access to substances which may have contributed to the initial offense which brought them into the hospital. In most cases they are responding to treatment as well and, therefore, completely aware of their actions. Given those circumstances, I feel there should be considerations in place which would hold them accountable for assaulting a staff in the process of carrying out their job. There have been assaults on staff and patients that I felt might not have happened had the person known there would be consequences for their actions. As a citizen I know that I behave accordingly if I know there are consequences for my actions. I wear a seatbelt because I do not wish to pay a fine. I feel a patient who knowingly assaults a staff (with no apparent influence from their mental illness) should be held accountable for their violent, illegal behavior. Oregon State Hospital states in their Vision Statement "We are a psychiatric hospital that inspires hope, promotes safety, and supports recovery for all." To have a person who is able to assault with no consequences and then continue that behavior again and again does not provide an environment where recovery can take place. The assault brings down the hope and the feeling of safety that we are trying to work and live in.

We at the State Hospital also understand that our patients, when they are actively experiencing mood or psychotic symptoms, may engage in violence and physical aggression. We do understand and differentiate between patients exhibiting violence due to an ongoing mental illness and patients who engage in willful, premeditated violence which is not due to a mental illness. It is not our intent to prosecute behaviors which were due to an active mental illness.

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