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MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

18th June 2024

To All Media Houses

PRESS RELEASE

MENTAL HEALTH-RELATED INCIDENTS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

The Mental Health Authority's attention has been drawn to two incidents which occurred last week in the Central Region involving persons alleged to experience some mental health-related challenges.

The first incident was of a 2-year-old who was in a critical state after allegedly being assaulted by a person with mental disorder found in public place, who repeatedly smashed her head on the ground. Reports received by the Authority indicate she has been discharged from the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital but requires further outpatient management.

The second tragic incident involved a patient allegedly suspected of experiencing some symptoms of mental health illness being abandoned in a bush at Gomoa Ojobi in the Central Region, after being on hospital admission at the Trauma and Specialist Hospital, Winneba. The victim was later found dead by community members. The Authority is awaiting the Ghana Health Service's report on its current investigations and commends the Service for starting a probe.

The Authority extends its deepest sympathies to both victims and their families. Although extremely saddened, the Authority acknowledges that such incidents reflect the severe systemic flaws that plague the nation's mental health landscape. They also draw attention to the negative outcomes of stigmatisation, discrimination, and a general lack of concern for those who are thought to suffer from mental health illnesses.

Despite some progress being made in the field of mental health over the years, the undeniable fact is that significant systemic gaps exist, which if still disregarded, will unfortunately lead to recurrences of such incidences. Challenges with inadequate funding, lack of implementation of sections of the Mental Health Act (Act 846, 2012), poor mental health literacy, and sub-par inter-sectoral collaboration among others require more deliberate actions and commitment for resolution.

The Authority will continue to work with all relevant stakeholders to advocate for further advancements in the Mental Health Act's implementation at all levels, the complete integration of mental health services into general healthcare services, and a stronger push to educate and raise awareness about mental health. It should be noted that Section 73 of the Mental Health Act enjoins District Assemblies, Social Welfare Services, Security Services, health professionals, family members, and any other citizen to play specific roles in the care of persons with mental disorders found in public places.

The Authority pleads with the government, stakeholders, CSOs, private sector, and the public for their support to ensure the improvements envisioned by the Act.

Thank you.

Signed

Prof. Pinaman Appau
Chief Executive

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