Providing care to wards of Texas probate courts

The State of Texas has over 54,000 legally incapacitated individuals, designated as Wards of the Court. Wards lack the physical and/or mental ability to provide shelter, financial management or physical care and therefore placed under guardianship. This presentation discusses the Inter-professional partnership involving undergraduate nursing students in four programs across the State of Texas who served as court visitors to Texas probate courts. Students assessed the Wards providing independent evaluation of their health status. This groundbreaking Inter-professional entry into the legal system provided students with clinical experiences in non-traditional venues while serving as a springboard for the other seminal clinical programs including inter-professional pediatric advocacy model and drug court clinical model. Mentoring among and between professionals in nursing education and the legal system will be presented for the following campuses. (A) UTMB-School of Nursing (SON) and Galveston Court: (1) the Court Visitor Program Model (CVP); (2) Mentoring of Court, Faculty & Students in Model implementation; and, (3) Mentoring in development of unique related clinical programs. (B) UTMB-SON and CPS: (1) the Inter-professional Pediatric Advocacy Model; (2) Mentoring of Court, Faculty, and Students in Model implementation. (C) Blinn College Associate Degree Nursing Program: (1) Mentoring of Court, Faculty and Students in Model Implementation, and, (2) Drug Court Clinical Model. (D) UTArlington-SON and Tarrant Court: Court, Faculty and Student mentoring process in the development of the CVP. (E) UTAustin-SON and Travis Court: Court, Faculty and Student mentoring process in the development of the CVP for a RN-BSN Public Health Nursing practicum course.

Biography
Mary E O’Keefe is a lawyer (JD) and a registered nurse (RN), with a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in nursing and a licensed professional counselor (LPC). She has a certification as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing (CNS Psych/Mental Health) and has extensive training in alternate dispute resolution, including mediation and arbitration. He is a Professor in the UTMB School of Nursing, Galveston, Texas, where she has been awarded the Constance Brewer Kooey Endowed Professorship in Nursing and is recognized as a University of Texas Distinguished Teaching Professor. She is also a Professor in the UTMB Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, a Clinical Associate Professor in the UTMB School of Medicine and a Visiting Professor in the Shantou University Schools of Medicine and Nursing, Shantou, China. She has published a series of textbooks known as Nursing Practice and the Law: Avoiding Malpractice and Other Legal Risks. She has a pending publication entitled Policy, Power, & Politics: Creating the Leadership Potential in Nursing Practice.

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