

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE LAW. By EB Beis. Rockville, MD: Aspen, 1984. x + 389 pp. No price available.

Reviewed by James C. Weissman, LLM

At the outset, the author asserts "No other health area is so dominated by law" (p. 9). This comprehensive and cogent treatment of the mental health and law subject supports the thesis. *Mental Health and the Law* is an excellent primer and is highly recommended for mental health professionals and administrators.

The most striking feature of the volume is its informative style. In contrast to the typical lawyer-produced material, this book explains legal principles in a succinct and lucid manner. The author's methodology is to define the legal concepts in legal terminology but to explain them by reference to rich, illustrative case material. As a result, the text is both informative and comprehensible.

Besides addressing the usual mental health and law topics, Beis emphasizes original themes, such as the "professional will," which offers significant practical impact. His incisive detailed discussion of the principles of mental health liability is noteworthy. Mr. Beis' familiarity with the subject is obvious and is highlighted by such gems as elaboration of malpractice policies of insurance carriers for the major professional mental health organizations. The author offers an excellent set of recommendations for adopting a preventive approach to avoiding malpractice liability.

*Mental Health and the Law* is encyclopedic in scope. In addition to textual coverage of the various mental health and legal interfaces, this volume also includes an extremely useful set of appendices. The appendices summarize and catalogue state mental health statutory provisions relating to involuntary commitment, voluntary admission, treatment rights, consent and communication rights, information and records rights, and grievance and access rights.

*Mental Health and the Law* is not flawless. Occasionally, a reference is in error or a legal concept is slightly misstated, and a few topics are abbreviated excessively. These faults are minor, however, as the volume is a bright success in achieving its multiple objectives of explaining complex legal doctrines for the mental health community, promoting guidelines for avoiding malpractice liability, and educating mental health professionals about the principles and values of the legal system.