




MassHealth
Acute Outpatient Hospital Bulletin 38
August 2023

TO: Acute Outpatient Hospital Emergency Departments Participating in MassHealth

FROM: Mike Levine, Assistant Secretary for MassHealth 

RE: **Reminder to Acute Outpatient Hospitals of Requirements for Emergency Department Behavioral Health Assessments**

Background

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services' (EOHHS) [Acute Hospital Request for Applications \(RFA\) for Rate Year 2023](#) (RY23 RFA) defined responsibilities for Acute Hospital Emergency Departments (EDs) to perform comprehensive evaluations for individuals presenting to the ED in a behavioral health crisis. These requirements are established in Appendix I: Standards for Behavioral Health Emergency Department Crisis Evaluations (Appendix I). The behavioral health crisis evaluations provided in EDs include initial assessments of risk, diagnosis, and coordination of appropriate disposition for members in a behavioral health crisis in the ED. As part of the crisis evaluation, the ED must follow the Expedited Psychiatric Inpatient Admissions (EPIA) protocol, according to Appendix I, **Section II.C.iii**.

This bulletin reiterates and clarifies hospital reporting requirements established through Appendix I, **Section II.C.iii**, which incorporates the requirements of EPIA. These requirements and this bulletin are applicable unless and until such time that the RY23 RFA or subsequent rate year Acute Hospital RFAs cease to incorporate the EPIA protocol or the bulletin is otherwise superseded.

Expedited Psychiatric Inpatient Admissions Protocols

The EPIA protocol sets clear steps and responsibility for escalating cases where individuals in need of inpatient psychiatric hospitalization present to the ED, but are not able to get a placement identified within 24 hours of their arrival in the ED.

Appendix I incorporates the EPIA protocol and its requirements. All MassHealth participating Acute Hospitals must follow the EPIA escalation procedure, and **must notify MassHealth no later than 24 hours** after a MassHealth member identified as requiring inpatient psychiatric hospitalization arrives in the Acute Hospital's ED, if the individual has not been admitted to an appropriate inpatient psychiatric setting within 24 hours. Notification must be submitted to MassHealth through the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Access (MABHA) website under Appendix I, **Section II.F.ii**.

For more information about EPIA protocols, please see <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/expedited-psychiatric-inpatient-admissions-epia-policy#epia-protocols->

Expedited Psychiatric Inpatient Admissions Protocol Enforcement

Pursuant to Appendix I, **Section II.C.iii**, MassHealth Acute Hospitals must follow the EPIA protocol for reporting all individuals awaiting psychiatric inpatient placement in the ED, and pursuant to Appendix I, **Section II.F.ii**, MassHealth must be notified of such individuals who are MassHealth members using the MAHBA website. EOHHS is proactively monitoring the MABHA website for compliance with these requirements. Facilities that fail to meet these requirements may be subject to enforcement action, which may include, but is not necessarily limited to, overpayment action pursuant to 130 CMR 450.237: *Overpayments: Determination* or denial of payment for failure to meet the conditions of payment established under the RY23 RFA.

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Questions

If you have any questions about the information in this bulletin, please contact the MassHealth Customer Service Center at (800) 841-2900 or email your inquiry to provider@masshealthquestions.com.