

Department of Mental Health Inpatient Licensing Division

Clinical Competencies/Operational Standards Related to Co-occurring Autism Spectrum Disorder or Other Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ASD/ID/DD)

Inpatient psychiatric facilities licensed by the Department of Mental Health are expected to have the capability to provide care to patients who require inpatient psychiatric hospitalization, who present with Autism Spectrum Disorders or Other Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ASD/ID/DD), but who do not require specialized treatment due to their ASD/ID/DD beyond the competencies listed below.

Each general inpatient psychiatric facility shall assure that it has the capacity to:

- Provide care to patients with mild to moderate presentations of Autism Spectrum Disorder or other intellectual and/or developmental disabilities whose baseline level of functional impairment is mild to moderate as well. Patients with significant maladaptive behavior, inability to maintain ADLs, as well as those with significant self-injurious or violent behavior, due to their ASD/ID/DD may have needs that exceed the expected capability of a general inpatient psychiatric unit.
- Recognize the clinical needs of common co-occurring physical conditions that are associated with many patients with ASD/ID/DD (e.g., severe constipation, diarrhea, urinary tract infections, food allergies, etc.).
- Provide sensory supports for varying levels of functioning.
- Ensure all staff receive consistent education and maintain current trainings (i.e., upon hire, as needed, and annually) to work with and care for this population.
- Provide ongoing trainings and demonstration of competencies in de-escalating behaviors of patients with ASD/ID/DD, as part of the general de-escalation program.
- Evaluate and document care needs during the referral and acceptance process, and use this information to incorporate the inclusion of behavioral triggers/warning signs, as well as strengths, motivators and any sensory tools that have been successfully employed for direct care staff and the multidisciplinary team.
- Notify and collaborate with the Department of Developmental Services, as appropriate and with the Department of Education (DOE), town or city special education departments to ensure the continuity of special education services for eligible students.
- Engage the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) teams, Department of Education (DOE) teams, DMH, and/or DDS for consultation and discharge planning as needed.
- Minimize the difficulty with transitions, especially by providing discharge information to care managers and outpatient services. Ideally, the same team members (both inpatient

and outpatient) would work with these patients as they move across the care continuum.

- Work with families and other caregivers before discharge to enhance successful transition of level of care and reduce recidivism.

Each general inpatient psychiatric facility is recommended to consider:

- Flexible availability of a separate, designated, less stimulating space is best.

A facility with available beds may deny admission to a patient whose needs have been determined by the facility medical director, or the medical director's physician designee when unavailable* to exceed the facility's capability at the time admission is sought. The medical director's determination must be written, and include the factors justifying the denial and why mitigating efforts, such as utilization of additional staff, would have been inadequate. [See DMH Licensing Bulletin #18-01 - *Documentation of Unit Conditions and Facility Denial of Inpatient Care* and 104 CMR 27.05 (3) (d).]

* The medical director's physician designee must be a physician who is vested with the full range of the medical director's authority and responsibility in the medical director's absence.