



# COVID-19 Inpatient Psychiatric Facility DMH Guidelines, Support, and MassHealth Investment

*Updated as of May 21, 2020*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) has worked to ensure residents have access to inpatient behavioral health treatment while mitigating risk of infection for patients, providers, and staff.

To further support these efforts, EOHHS is issuing a series of clinical guidelines and resources to support inpatient psychiatric facilities (DMH-licensed freestanding inpatient psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric units in acute care hospitals) as they respond to the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, EOHHS will be providing **approximately \$10M in funding** to these facilities for their COVID-19 response, as part of MassHealth's provider stabilization efforts.

Through this guidance and support, EOHHS aims to:

- **Support timely acute behavioral health treatment** and minimize avoidable wait times in Emergency Departments
- **Require heightened infection control procedures in all psychiatric units** and facilities to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- Support effective behavioral health treatment and medical consults as needed to **manage patients infected with COVID-19 receiving inpatient psychiatric treatment**
- Maintain sufficient inpatient bed capacity and **support safe discharge for patients**

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) is issuing a series of [clinical guidelines and resources](#) to support facilities as they respond to COVID-19 and ensure the safety of patient and staff. This includes:

- Clinical guidelines on updated **No Reject and Expedited Psychiatric Inpatient Admissions (EPIA) policies**
- Clinical guidelines on **infection control standards** and **safely admitting** and providing ongoing management for patients with COVID-19
- Requirements for **daily COVID-19 related reporting** from DMH licensed inpatient psychiatric facilities, to be shared publicly
- Informational resources on **discharge solutions**

MassHealth will provide approximately \$10M in additional payments to DMH-licensed inpatient psychiatric facilities based on a **two-tier DMH structure** to address the increased costs associated with COVID-19 response.

1. **Tier 1 facilities do not knowingly admit patients who are symptomatic for, have known exposure to, or are confirmed to be infected with COVID-19, but must implement robust infection control processes as required by DMH guidelines.**
  - Facilities that attest that they are in adherence with these guidelines and meet other requirements will receive an **increase in MassHealth reimbursement equivalent to 10% of the MassHealth fee schedule.**
2. **Tier 2 facilities will admit patients who are symptomatic for, have known exposure to, or are confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 and must be prepared to care**

**for patients with COVID-19** who do not require an acute level of medical care (e.g., establishing dedicated COVID-19 units).

- These facilities will receive an **increase in MassHealth reimbursement equivalent to 20% of the MassHealth fee schedule** in recognition of the costs associated with stricter infection control and management of patients with COVID-19.

#### **Additional detail on clinical guidelines**

- **No Reject policy:** If a facility is accepting admissions and a patient has been medically cleared, requires inpatient psychiatric treatment, and otherwise meets admission criteria (including Tier 1 or Tier 2 COVID-19 status criteria), the facility must admit that patient for care. Admission may not be delayed beyond 6 hours for pending COVID test results.
- **Enhanced EPIA:** MABHA entry required earlier at 8 hours; insurance carriers to be notified for assistance as soon as possible; DMH involvement triggered earlier at 24 hours.
- **Infection control and safely admitting and providing ongoing management for patients confirmed to be infected with COVID-19:** All DMH licensed facilities must follow either Tier 1 or Tier 2 clinical guidelines and are expected to:
  - **Obtain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** for their providers and staff. DMH licensed free-standing hospitals may request emergency supplies of PPE from DPH through DMH, using the DPH form if their own supply chains are unable to maintain adequate supply.
  - **Implement policies and protocols to mitigate spread of COVID-19** (e.g., no visitors except attorneys and special circumstances, training and education of staff, social distancing, appropriate hygiene, face masks for staff, appropriate cleaning, screening patients and staff for COVID-19 symptoms).
  - **Establish a relationship with a medical hospital for consultation**, coordination of care, and to facilitate transfer of patients requiring more intensive medical care; consultation with an infection control specialist (through medical facility or separate source) required.
  - **Establish separate dedicated negative COVID-19 and quarantine spaces.**
  - **Test all patients prior to or upon admission;** testing results NOT required prior to admission, except in the case of rapid tests; patients awaiting test results should remain in quarantine area.
- **Discharge solutions:** Information on available discharge options, including leveraging community options.