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**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
DIVISION OF CLINICAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
LICENSING DIVISION – BULLETIN #20-04R**

June 8, 2020

**COVID-19 EMERGENCY GUIDANCE
Admission, COVID-19 Testing, and EPIA**

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, this bulletin highlights current regulations and policies that support behavioral health patients leaving Emergency Departments as soon as possible once it is determined that a psychiatric inpatient level of care is required. In recognition of the vital role of acute psychiatric facilities in providing safe appropriate care for individuals in psychiatric crisis, DMH is highlighting licensed facilities' obligations to admit and treat patients meeting admission criteria within their license class. The Department of Mental Health (DMH) is also enhancing its capacity to provide assistance through the Expedited Psychiatric Inpatient Admission process (EPIA), so we may all play our role in keeping patients and health care workers safe.

1. No Reject Policy interpreted for COVID-19 Pandemic:
 - a. If a facility has been identified as accepting admissions and a patient has been medically cleared, requires inpatient psychiatric treatment, and otherwise meets admission criteria, they must admit that patient for care. A facility may deny admission to a patient only if such admission would result in a census exceeding the facility's operational capacity or if the admission has been determined by the facility medical director to exceed the facility's capability at the time admission is sought. This determination must be recorded in writing as an admission denial [Bulletin 18-01](#) and shall be subject to review by the Department of Mental Health.
 - b. It is expected that patients will be preferentially re-admitted to the most recent facility where they had been hospitalized. A facility may not deny admission based on circumstances of a patient's previous admission, including those who were discharged to another facility for treatment and are returning to that inpatient psychiatric facility.
 - c. Facilities should make every effort to admit patients who are in EDs that are within the Facility's healthcare system.
 - d. At this time, inpatient psychiatric facilities, identified to DMH as

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accepting patients who are confirmed to be infected with COVID-19, must be prepared to admit patients who have tested positive or are suspect for COVID-19 and who do not need medical hospital treatment for COVID-19.

2. Enhanced Expedited Psychiatric Inpatient Admission (EPIA):

- a. All individuals who have been screened appropriate for inpatient psychiatric level of care and are in an ED, ESP, home or other boarding setting awaiting placement must be entered into MABHA no later than 24 hours of such screening and before referring to DMH for assistance under EPIA, to initiate a coordinated advocacy response from the State Agencies involved (MassHealth, DMH, DDS, DCF, DYS, etc.).
- b. The insurance carrier must be notified and involved with the ED and/or ESP as soon as hospital level of care is determined for the individual, as provided in current EPIA escalation protocols.
- c. EPIA referral to DMH may be made at 24 hours. Documentation of ED/ESP and insurance carrier advocacy efforts are required.
- d. Should the above steps not be taken at the time of escalation to DMH, there will be a delay in accepting the referral until they are completed.

Any questions regarding this bulletin should be directed to the DMH Licensing Division at 617-626- 8117 or by email to Teresa.J.Reynolds@massmail.state.ma.us