COVID-19 DEDICATED UNITS

In light of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, this bulletin highlights the potential need for facilities to stand up COVID-19 Dedicated Units for the admission of persons who require inpatient psychiatric treatment and also are in need of an environment able to meet the infection control needs of active COVID-19 infection. Such units are required to support behavioral health patients who are diagnosed with active COVID-19 infection that does not require inpatient medical treatment.

This bulletin announces a process for Tier 2 hospitals and some Tier 1 hospitals (see DMH Licensing Bulletin #20-05R for a full description of Tier 1 and Tier 2 hospitals) to develop COVID-19 Dedicated Units when the need exists for these units.

1. Process for Tier 2 Hospitals:

   a. If a facility has attested to providing services as a Tier 2 hospital during the pandemic emergency, and finds that it is admitting a sufficient number of patients with active COVID-19 infection requiring these services, it can apply to DMH to identify one or more unit(s) as a COVID-19 Dedicated Unit(s). Such a unit(s) must be developed with a plan to serve only patients with active COVID-19 infections (as well as meeting criteria for inpatient psychiatric treatment) for a period of 4 weeks.

   b. The facility applying for approval of a COVID-19 Dedicated Unit(s) is required to present to the DMH Licensing Division that there is current clinical need for such a unit. It 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; and must agree to accept admissions from emergency departments or other hospitals outside of their usual system of hospitals.
2. **Process for Tier 1 Hospitals**:

   a. If a facility has attested to providing services as a Tier 1 hospital during the pandemic emergency, and finds that it has a sufficient number of patients with active COVID-19 infection and it is unable to transfer these patients to a Tier 2 facility, it can apply to DMH to identify one or more unit(s) as a COVID-19 Dedicated Unit(s). Such a unit(s) must be developed with a plan to serve only patients with active COVID-19 infections (as well as meeting criteria for inpatient psychiatric treatment) for a period of 4 weeks.

   b. The Tier 1 facility must attest to becoming a Tier 2 facility for a period of at least 4 weeks, and submit all supporting documentation for this status (see DMH Licensing Bulletin #20-05R for a full description of Tier 1 and Tier 2 hospitals).

   c. The facility is required to present to the DMH Licensing Division that there is medical necessity for such a unit prior to DMH approval of a COVID-19 Dedicated Unit. They 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; and must agree to accept admissions from emergency departments or other hospitals outside of their usual system of hospitals.

3. **Process for Renewing or Discontinuing a COVID-19 Dedicated Unit Status**:

   a. Facilities with a COVID-19 Dedicated Unit may apply for renewal of this status for an additional 4-week period, after providing continued evidence that there is a current clinical need for such a unit to DMH Licensing.

   b. Facilities with a COVID-19 Dedicated Unit may request to discontinue this status prior to the expiration of the 4-week period of time, after providing evidence that there is no longer a medical necessity for such a unit to DMH Licensing, and that the conversion of this unit back to a regular unit will enable the facility to respond to the changing needs of persons waiting in emergency departments for necessary inpatient psychiatric treatment.

4. **DMH Licensing will provide MassHealth an update regarding any facility that has been approved to 1) stand up a COVID-19 Dedicated Unit, 2) renew the status of their COVID-19 Dedicated Unit, or 3) discontinue the status of their COVID-19 Dedicated Unit.**

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