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DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
DIVISION OF CLINICAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
LICENSING DIVISION – BULLETIN #21-01

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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