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**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH**  
**DIVISION OF CLINICAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**  
**LICENSING DIVISION – BULLETIN #19-01**  
**March 1, 2019**

**Clinical Competencies/Operational Standards for DMH Licensed Inpatient Facilities**

This bulletin, and the attachments hereto are issued pursuant to Department of Mental Health (DMH) regulations 104 CMR 27.03(5)&(8), which provide that DMH “may establish clinical competencies and additional operational standards for care and treatment of patients admitted to facilities<sup>1</sup> licensed pursuant to 104 CMR 27.00, including for specialty populations.” The purpose of this regulatory provision is to assist the Department in assuring that DMH licensed facilities have the capability to provide the level of care needed by individuals who meet criteria for inpatient hospitalization, thereby increasing access to services required by citizens of the Commonwealth.

The attached clinical competencies/standards were developed by a broad stakeholder group that included DMH clinical and licensing staff, representatives of DMH licensed facilities, public and commercial payers, and professional trade associations. They are intended as guidelines to inform practice and to provide a baseline for DMH licensing reviews of individual facility’s compliance with licensing regulations. The competencies/standards cover the following areas:

- Clinical Competencies/ Operational Standards Related to Co-occurring Medical Conditions: Psychiatric units within General Hospitals
- Clinical Competencies/ Operational Standards Related to Co-occurring Medical Conditions: Free-standing Psychiatric Units/ Facilities
- Clinical Competencies/ Operational Standards Related to Severe Behavior/ Assault Risk
- Clinical Competencies/ Operational Standards Related to Co-occurring Autism Spectrum Disorders or Other Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ASD/ ID/ DD)
- Clinical Competencies/ Operational Standards Related to Co-occurring Substance Use Disorders (SUD)

While it is expected that all facilities will generally be able to meet the clinical competencies/standards (including provision of services and equipment), it is not necessarily expected that each facility will have the resources or staff available at all times to meet all

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competencies and standards at all times, as circumstances within facility at any given time may limit its ability to be in compliance. Facilities must, however, have a plan in place to provide additional staff coverage or equipment as may be needed to facilitate admission of patients who require such coverage or equipment, and should be prepared to engage with public and commercial payers proactively as indicated.

The DMH Licensing Division will begin referring to the attached competencies/standards in its licensing reviews beginning May 1, 2019.

Questions regarding this bulletin should be directed to the DMH Licensing Division at 617-626-8117 or [DMH.Licensing@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:DMH.Licensing@massmail.state.ma.us)

**Attachments:**

Clinical Competencies/ Operational Standards Related to Co-occurring Medical Conditions:  
Psychiatric units within General Hospitals

Clinical Competencies/ Operational Standards Related to Co-occurring Medical Conditions:  
Free-standing Psychiatric Units/ Facilities

Clinical Competencies/ Operational Standards Related to Severe Behavior/ Assault Risk

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

Clinical Competencies/ Operational Standards Related to Co-occurring Substance Use Disorders (SUD)

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<sup>i</sup> The term “facility” as used in this bulletin includes DMH licensed units within general hospitals.