



December 10, 2014

Dear Colleague:

The purpose of this letter is to clarify New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) policy and guidance regarding appointments for patients discharged from psychiatric inpatient units.

OMH policy states that individuals being discharged from psychiatric inpatient units should have an appointment scheduled with an appropriate outpatient mental health clinic provider within 5 business days of discharge. The appointment should include a specific date, time, and location for the individual to meet with a clinic staff member to complete an intake and/or assessment. Furthermore, face-to-face assessment for all recipients must be provided in an expedited manner if a person's clinical condition so warrants, including the provision of medication.

OMH has supported the development of clinic open access or "walk-in" outpatient appointments in order to facilitate appointments for many individuals. However, "walk-in" appointments are not an adequate alternative for timely, scheduled aftercare for patients leaving the high intensity of services of a psychiatric inpatient unit. Those inpatient or outpatient psychiatric services substituting "walk-in" for scheduled post-hospital care are not meeting existing, and clinically necessary, standards of care.

The standard of care for post-hospital services by NYS providers, was established many years ago under the now ended Comprehensive Outpatient Program Services (COPS) initiative; it continues today. Individuals discharged from psychiatric inpatient units should have an appointment for an initial assessment by an outpatient provider within 5 business days of discharge. Open access is not a satisfactory alternative.

OMH *also* requires outpatient providers who have established an appointment within 5 business days for people referred from a psychiatric inpatient provider to assertively engage and follow up if the patient does not show up. Per 14 NYCRR Section 599.6(c)(7)(i), outpatient clinic admission policies "should include a mechanism for screening individuals at the time of referral and assuring that those referred from inpatient, forensic, or emergency settings, those determined to be at high risk, and those determined to be in urgent need by the Director of Community Services receive initial assessment services within five business days, and if indicated, are admitted to the clinic or referred to an appropriate provider of services."

Any psychiatric inpatient provider having difficulty obtaining an appointment within 5 business days post-hospital at an OMH-licensed outpatient mental health clinic should contact your local OMH Field Office for assistance. The OMH Field Office Licensing Directors are:

Lisa M. Gilbert
New York City Field Office
330 Fifth Avenue – 9th Floor
New York, NY 10001-3101
(212) 330-1661

Frank E. Barr
Hudson River Field Office
10 Ross Circle, Suite SN
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
(845) 454-8229

Roseann Avella
Long Island Field Office
Pilgrim PC, Building 45-3
998 Crooked Hill Road
West Brentwood, NY 11717-1087
(631) 761-2886

Richard K. King
Central New York Field Office
545 Cedar Street
Syracuse, NY 13210-2319
(315) 426-3930

Carol S. Sabatino
Western New York Field Office
737 Delaware Ave, Suite 200
Buffalo, NY 14209
(716) 885-4219

Thank you for your ongoing attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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Chief Medical Officer
New York State Office of Mental Health

cc: Robert Myers, PhD
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