



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR

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MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties

From: Joan Mikula, Commissioner of Mental Health
Monica Bharel, Commissioner of Public Health
Daniel Tsai, Assistant Secretary of MassHealth
Gary Anderson, Commissioner of Insurance

CC: Marylou Sudders, Secretary of Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Date: January 10, 2018

Re: Expedited Psychiatric Inpatient Admission Initiative

The circumstances of individuals in need of inpatient psychiatric hospitalization waiting in hospital emergency departments (ED) for inordinately long periods of time – a phenomenon that has become known as ED Boarding – has long been a problem in Massachusetts, as well as across the country. Among certain populations the problem has become a crisis with waiting times of days and sometimes weeks.

Last spring, Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) Secretary Marylou Sudders charged the Department of Mental Health (DMH), together with MassHealth and the Department of Public Health (DPH) to develop interventions to address this crisis by ensuring timely acceptance of individuals into appropriate hospital placements. In partnership with the Division of Insurance (DOI), the EOHHS agencies convened a task force comprised of insurance carriers, psychiatric and medical hospital providers, hospital and carrier trade associations, professional associations and state agency representatives. This task force has worked intensively over the intervening months to develop a multi-pronged approach to mitigating this crisis. The results of this collaborative process are:

- An Expedited Psychiatric Inpatient Admission Policy, effective February 1, 2018, setting clear steps and responsibility when placement has not been achieved in a reasonable period of time for escalating cases to senior clinical leadership at insurance carriers, inpatient psychiatric units, and ultimately to DMH, with the goal of identifying and resolving barriers to admission and relieving burdens on EDs.
- A Division of Insurance Bulletin, dated January 3, 2018, issued jointly by DOI, DMH and DPH, establishing the expectation that insurance carriers subject to DOI regulations will have adequate networks of inpatient facilities, and that carriers will have the capacity to help facilitate admission of difficult-to-place patients seven days a week.

- Revised DMH regulations to be promulgated in February will establish the principle that DMH licensure is guided by the needs of the Commonwealth to have the range of inpatient resources available to address the clinical requirements of its citizens, and which will clarify DMH's role in assuring that the facilities it licenses are fulfilling their responsibilities to meet this need under their license.

The Expedited Admission Policy and DOI Bulletin are attached. It is anticipated the DMH's revised regulations will be finalized and promulgated in February, 2018.

Implementation of this Initiative, particularly the Expedited Pyschiatric Inpatient Admission Policy, will begin on February 1, 2018, with the expectation that hospital EDs and the Emergency Services Programs (ESPs), insurance carriers and DMH will begin utilizing the procedures contained within that policy on that date. Other implementation steps, such as data collection and reporting, are still under development and will be communicated to stakeholders as they are finalized.

Beginning in January, 2018, DMH, DPH, MassHealth and DOI will be hosting a series of public presentations and listening sessions to help prepare for implementation around the state. The times and locations are as follows:

Tuesday, January 16, 1:00-3:00	Southcoast Hospital 581 Faunce Corner Road Dartmouth, MA 02747 Gymnasium, located near rear of building with its own entrance (look for the signs)
Wednesday, January 17, 10:00-12:00	Whitney Avenue Conference Center 361 Whitney Avenue Holyoke, MA 01040
Tuesday, January 23, 1:00-3:00	Department of Mental Health Central Office Boston Room, Main Entrance, Plaza Level 25 Staniford Street, Boston
Wednesday, January 24, 10:00-12:00	Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association First Floor Conference Room 500 District Ave, Burlington
Tuesday, January 30, 1:00-3:00	Webinar
Wednesday, January 31, 10:00-12:00	University of Massachusetts Board Room, at Biotech 1, 365 Plantation Street, Suite 300, Worcester

While registration is not required to attend, we ask that you do use this link to register for the meeting(s) you plan to attend. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/expedadmis2018> (You may need to cut and paste this link)

On behalf of all the state agency partners involved in this project, we would like to thank the private sector stakeholders who have worked so intensively, and in such a collaborative manner, over the last several months to bring us to this point. We look forward to further collaboration as we implement this initiative and achieve real success in alleviating the crisis of ED boarding.