

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Standard Operating Procedures

**Policy Name:** Mental Health Reception Screen

**Policy Number:** 508.14

**Effective Date:** 9/13/2019

**Page Number:** 1 of 5

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Health Services Division  
(Mental Health)

**Access Listing:**  
Level I: All Access

**I. Introduction and Summary:**

It is the policy of the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) that all offenders are screened for mental health needs and that referrals for further evaluations are made as clinically indicated. This procedure is applicable to all Georgia Department of Corrections facilities with diagnostic units.

**II. Authority:**

A. GDC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): 213.02 Detainee Screening, Sentencing, Pre-Admission, and Admission; 508.15 Mental Health Evaluations; and 508.19 Mental Health Referral and Triage;

B. NCCHC Standards for Health Services in Prisons;

C. NCCHC Standards for Health Services in Juvenile Detention and Confinement Facilities; and

D. ACA Standards: 4-4370 (MANDATORY), 4-4371 (MANDATORY), and 4-4372.

**III. Definitions:**

A. **Mental Health Reception Screen** - A procedure conducted as part of the normal diagnostic reception and classification process on all offenders entering the system, designed to identify broadly those offenders with Serious Mental Illness or offenders in need of further mental health attention or evaluation. Mental health screening is conducted by a Qualified Mental Health Professional utilizing standard forms and procedures.

B. **Mental Health Evaluation** - A procedure conducted as part of the diagnostic reception and classification process on all offenders who, based on the results of their initial Mental Health Reception Screen, indicate the need for a more comprehensive mental health psychosocial history and assessment of current symptoms.

C. **Qualified Mental Health Professional** - Mental Health Unit Managers, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRN), Licensed Nurses, Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Master or Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, Mental Health Counselors, Mental Health Behavior Specialists, Multifunctional Correctional Officers and others

<b>GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS</b> <b>Standard Operating Procedures</b>		
<b>Policy Name:</b> Mental Health Reception Screen		
<b>Policy Number:</b> 508.14	<b>Effective Date:</b> 9/13/2019	<b>Page Number:</b> 2 of 5
<b>Authority:</b> Commissioner	<b>Originating Division:</b> Health Services Division (Mental Health)	<b>Access Listing:</b> Level I: All Access

who, by virtue of their education, credentials and experience are permitted by law to evaluate and care for the mental health needs of offenders.

- D. **Licensed Mental Health Clinician** - Psychiatrist, Psychologist, APRN, Licensed Master or Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Professional Counselor, and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist.
- E. **Mental Health Unit Manager** - The Mental Health Unit Manager is the staff member responsible for the overall operation of the Mental Health Unit and the provision of Mental Health services in accordance with Georgia Department of Corrections Standard Operating Procedures at the assigned MH facility.

**IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:**

A. Mental Health Reception Screen Procedures:

1. All offenders identified to receive mental health services will have their Mental Health Reception Screens evaluated and the Mental Health Evaluation completed so that they may be placed on the mental health caseload or transferred within five (5) business days to an appropriate mental health facility. Offenders who arrive to diagnostics on psychotropic medications, which have been discontinued by a psychiatrist utilizing the evaluation process, will be placed on the mental health caseload and will be observed by the receiving facility until ready for discharge or transfer;
2. During intake, all offenders will be interviewed and screened for placement on the mental health caseload or for further evaluation, based on:
  - a. Suicidal ideation;
  - b. Recent suicide attempts;
  - c. History of abuse (as a victim);
  - d. Inability to function in general population as a result of mental illness; or
  - e. Having received mental health treatment and/or prescribed psychotropic medication within the last six (6) months.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Standard Operating Procedures

**Policy Name:** Mental Health Reception Screen

**Policy Number:** 508.14

**Effective Date:** 9/13/2019

**Page Number:** 3 of 5

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Health Services Division  
(Mental Health)

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3. On the day of arrival at a diagnostic facility, a Qualified Mental Health Professional will complete the Mental Health Reception Screen (form M30-01-01) on all newly arriving offenders;
4. Offenders on psychotropic medication or with potential mental health problems will be referred to a Mental Health Counselor for a thorough Mental Health Evaluation;
5. If the offender presents as a serious danger to self or others (i.e., is self-injurious, suicidal, homicidal) or with psychotic decompensation, he or she immediately will be referred for an emergency Mental Health Evaluation conducted by a Licensed Mental Health Clinician;
6. Based on the Mental Health Reception Screen, the offender will be referred for an initial psychiatric evaluation, to be performed by a psychiatrist, within fourteen (14) calendar days if the offender is currently prescribed psychotropic medication(s) for mental health treatment purposes;
7. Based on the Mental Health Reception Screen, the offender will be referred for a Mental Health Evaluation, to be completed within fourteen (14) calendar days, if any of the following conditions exist:
  - a. There is a history of having received mental health services or having been prescribed psychotropic medication within the past six (6) months;
  - b. There are signs and symptoms indicating a possible thought or mood disorder or indications of mild, moderate or chronic mental illness;
  - c. There is reason to believe the offender is in need of mental health services because of head trauma, assaultive or violent behavior, a history of abuse (as victim), intellectual or neurodevelopmental disorders, physical disabilities, a special education history or other conditions; or
  - d. The offender requests mental health services.
8. Following the completion of the Mental Health Reception Screen, recommendations for a Mental Health Evaluation will be made on the first page of the screening form (form M30-01-01) and the Mental Health Reception Screen

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Standard Operating Procedures

**Policy Name:** Mental Health Reception Screen

**Policy Number:** 508.14

**Effective Date:** 9/13/2019

**Page Number:** 4 of 5

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

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will be forwarded to the Clinical Director or Clinical Consultant for review and signature. The Mental Health Unit Manager/designee will be responsible for:

- a. Ensuring that all Mental Health Evaluations are scheduled as recommended;
  - b. Emergency Mental Health Evaluations must be scheduled within twenty-four (24) hours or on the next business day;
  - c. Routine Mental Health Evaluations must be scheduled within fourteen (14) calendar days of the Mental Health Reception Screen; and
  - d. The Mental Health Unit Manager/designee will also ensure that all special precautions noted on the Mental Health Reception Screen are immediately implemented pending completion of the Mental Health Evaluation.
9. Each Mental Health Unit Manager/designee will maintain a permanent log (form M30-01-02) of all diagnostic referrals. The following information must be tracked:
- a. Offender's name and GDC number;
  - b. Date of referral;
  - c. Reason for referral;
  - d. Psychiatric referral for emergency evaluations;
  - e. Psychiatric referral for offenders arriving on psychotropic medication;
  - f. Routine Mental Health Evaluation;
  - g. Date Mental Health Evaluation is completed;
  - h. Name and title of the evaluator; and
  - i. Mental health classification level assigned.
10. The Mental Health Reception Screen and any other pertinent mental health

<b>GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS</b> <b>Standard Operating Procedures</b>		
<b>Policy Name:</b> Mental Health Reception Screen		
<b>Policy Number:</b> 508.14	<b>Effective Date:</b> 9/13/2019	<b>Page Number:</b> 5 of 5
<b>Authority:</b> Commissioner	<b>Originating Division:</b> Health Services Division (Mental Health)	<b>Access Listing:</b> Level I: All Access

information will be placed in the mental health section (section 5) of the medical file. Copies will also be placed in the mental health record (section 4) if one is established;

11. Medical staff and the assigned counselor at Probation Detention Centers/Boot Camp will screen for mental health needs of newly arriving detainees in accordance with GDC SOP 213.02 Detainee Screening, Sentencing, Pre-Admission, and Admission. If a detainee is prescribed psychotropic medication or if any potential mental health needs are identified, a Mental Health Evaluation with a Qualified Mental Health Professional will be:

- a. Scheduled and completed within three (3) business days at a Georgia Department of Corrections' Mental Health facility; and
- b. Referrals to Georgia Department of Corrections Mental Health facilities are done in accordance with GDC SOP 508.19, Mental Health Referral & Triage.

12. Detainees that arrive on psychotropic medication or in need of mental health services should be referred to their assigned Mental Health provider facility listed in Captiva or PowerDMS (form M35-01-03).

**B. Reception Screen Procedures:**

1. During the diagnostic process all offenders will be administered the Culture Fair Intelligence Test. Any offender receiving a score of 70 or below on the Culture Fair will be referred to the Mental Health Behavior Specialist for further psychological testing in accordance with GDC SOP 508.15, Mental Health Evaluations.

**V. Attachments:**

- Attachment 1: Mental Health Reception Screen Form (M30-01-01)
- Attachment 2: Diagnostic Referral Log (M30-01-02)

**VI. Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:**

Upon completion, Attachment 1 shall be placed in the offender's mental health file. At the end of the offender's need for mental health services and/or sentence, the mental health file shall be placed within the offender's health record and retained for ten (10) years. Attachment 2 will be maintained in the mental health area for ten (10) years.