

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS Standard Operating Procedures		
Policy Name: Mental Health Evaluations		
Policy Number: 508.15	Effective Date: 5/3/2018	Page Number: 1 of 9
Authority: Commissioner	Originating Division: Health Services Division	Access Listing: Level II: Required Offender Access

I. Introduction and Summary:

It is the policy of the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) to ensure that offenders with Serious Mental Illness and other identified Mental Health (MH) needs are thoroughly and properly evaluated by Qualified Mental Health Professionals for the purpose of identifying the offender’s need for Mental Health services and assigning a Mental Health classification level.

II. Authority:

- A. GDC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): 508.14 MH Reception Screen, 508.19 MH Referral and Triage, 508.21 Treatment Planning, 508.24 Psychotropic Medication Use Management, and 508.33 Transfer of Seriously Mentally Ill Offenders;
- B. National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) Standards for Health Services in Prisons: P-E-05 Mental Health Screening and Evaluation;
- C. NCCHC Standards for Health Services in Juvenile Facilities: Y-E-05 Mental Health Screening and Evaluations; and
- D. ACA Standards: 4-4368 (Mandatory), 4-4370 (Mandatory), 4-4372, and 4-4374.

III. Definitions:

- A. **Mental Health Reception Screening** - A procedure conducted as part of the normal diagnostic reception and classification process on all offenders entering the system. The screening is designed to identify broadly those offenders with Serious Mental Illness or offenders in need of further Mental Health attention or evaluation. Mental Health screenings are 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 based on results from the Mental Health Reception Screening indicating a more comprehensive Mental Health assessment is needed.
- C. **Serious Mental Illness** - A substantial disorder of thought or mood that significantly impairs judgment, behavior, capacity to recognize reality, or cope with the ordinary demands of life within the correctional environment and is manifested by mental suffering or disability. Serious Mental Illness requires a Mental Health diagnosis and treatment in accordance with an individualized treatment plan.

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D. **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, and Mental Health Behavior Specialists.

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 GDC Standard Operating Procedures at the assigned Mental Health facility/facilities.

IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:

This procedure is applicable to all GDC facilities with a Mental Health mission.

A. General Evaluation Procedures:

1. All Mental Health referrals coming from the Mental Health Reception Screening process or through the Mental Health referral process will go to the Mental Health Unit Manager for assignment to the appropriate evaluation track.
2. Mental Health classification will be assigned based on the evaluation outcome. The Mental Health Unit Manager will ensure that Mental Health classification levels are entered into the appropriate computer tracking system (Scribe) and processed appropriately based on the offender's status (i.e., diagnostic vs. permanent).
3. Under no circumstances should an offender determined to need Mental Health services be physically returned to a GDC State or county institution, boot camp, detention center, or transitional center without on-site mental health services. It is the responsibility of the Mental Health Unit Manager at the evaluating site to ensure that appropriate housing is arranged and any special precautions ordered are implemented.
4. It is the responsibility of the evaluator to get appropriate Consent to Mental Health Treatment (form M20-02-01) signed at the time of the evaluation. The original form will be filed in section five of the Mental Health record and a copy given to the offender.

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5. Request for Records Procedures:

- a. For all offenders determined to be in need of any level of Mental Health services, their hospitalization and recent Mental Health treatment records will be routinely requested after obtaining the consent of the offender;
- b. It is the responsibility of the evaluator to obtain the appropriate authorization by getting Attachment 3, Authorization for Release of Information (M31-01-03) signed at the time of the evaluation so all records needed may be requested. A copy of the form will be filed in the Mental Health record (Section 5); and
- c. A log, Attachment 5, Requested Records Log (M31-01-05), will be established at each Mental Health unit to track requests for records. The following information will be logged:
 - i. The offender's name, GDC number, and the last four digits of the social security number;
 - ii. All places from which records were requested;
 - iii. Date request for records was mailed or faxed;
 - iv. Date records were received; and
 - v. If records were not received, all follow-up actions to attempt to obtain the records.

B. Specific Evaluation Procedures:

1. Emergency Evaluations:

- a. Offenders meeting the following criteria will be referred for emergency evaluations:
 - i. Offenders identified as posing a danger to self or others or as being actively psychotic by the Qualified Mental Health Professional during the Mental Health Reception Screen or by the Mental Health Unit Manager while triaging Mental Health referrals;

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- ii. Any situation where a clear need for immediate intervention is present; and
- iii. A Psychiatrist, Psychologist or APRN will conduct emergency evaluations.

2. Psychiatric/Psychological Evaluations:

- a. Offenders meeting the following criteria will be referred for an initial psychiatric evaluation:
 - i. Offenders entering the GDC's custody with an active prescription for psychotropic medication (NOTE: When indicated, prescriptions will be rewritten by a physician until the offender is evaluated by a Psychiatrist or APRN); and
 - ii. Offenders referred by a Physician to a Psychiatrist or APRN for psychiatric evaluation.
- b. Offenders meeting the following criteria will be referred for an initial psychological evaluation:
 - i. Those offenders entering the GDC's custody that do not have an active prescription for psychotropic medication; and
 - ii. Offenders referred by the Mental Health Unit Manager for an initial psychological evaluation prior to receiving an initial psychiatric evaluation.
- c. The Mental Health Unit Manager/designee will schedule initial psychiatric/psychological evaluations in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures 508.14 and 508.19.
- d. Psychiatric/psychological evaluations will be completed and documented in accordance with Standard Operating Procedure 508.24.

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- e. Psychiatric/psychological follow-up will be based on the clinical judgment of the Psychiatrist, APRN or Psychologist and in accordance with Standard Operating Procedure 508.24.
3. Mental Health Services Screening/Evaluation:
- a. Upon receipt of a self or staff referral other than through the Mental Health Reception Screening process, a Qualified Mental Health Professional will perform an assessment consisting of a review of records and a brief clinical interview. The information obtained will be documented on Attachment 1, Mental Health Evaluation for Services (M31-01-01), Attachment 2, Mental Status Evaluation (M31-01-02), and the lower portion of Attachment 1, Mental Health Referral Form (M35-01-01) from SOP 508.19 Mental Health Referral and Triage. If it is determined the offender is not in need of services, the Evaluation process will terminate at this point. The Mental Health Referral Form with the Mental Health Evaluation for Services will be placed in the offender's medical record (Section 5).
 - b. All referrals received through the Reception Screening (diagnostic) process will receive a full Mental Health Evaluation for Services, using Attachment 1 (M31-01-01) which may be supplemented with Attachment 2, Mental Status Evaluation (M31-01-02).
 - c. Once the Mental Health Evaluation for Services is completed, possible outcomes include:
 - i. The offender is not in need of Mental Health services;
 - ii. The offender is in need of Mental Health services and will be given a Mental Health classification level based on the level of care that is clinically indicated; or
 - iii. The offender needs further evaluation before determining their classification level.
 - d. A clinical Psychologist or other licensed clinician will review and sign all Mental Health Service Evaluations conducted by unlicensed Mental Health personnel.

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- e. Once the Mental Health classification level is determined, the level will be entered in the appropriate computer tracking system (Scribe) and will be made a part of the diagnostic package for offenders referred through the Mental Health Reception Screening process. For offenders referred from other facilities or from general population, Mental Health classification will be entered in the appropriate computer tracking system (Scribe) and the Mental Health Unit Manager will arrange for transfer as necessary in accordance with Standard Operating Procedure 508.33.
 - f. Any offender classified as level II or higher will be scheduled for either an initial psychiatric/psychological evaluation as a part of the treatment planning process. In general, a Psychiatrist or APRN will evaluate any offender where the question of medication needs to be addressed and the psychologist will conduct initial psychological evaluations on those offenders where medication is not an issue. After the initial psychiatric/psychological evaluation is completed the Psychiatrist or Psychologist will complete Attachment 2, Mental Health Diagnosis List (M20-01-05) from SOP 508.09 Mental Health Records using the most current Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) criteria and make a final determination regarding level of care.
 - g. Once the level of care is determined the Mental Health Unit Manager will assign the offender a Mental Health Counselor who will see the offender within 48 hours.
 - h. Attachment 1, Mental Health Evaluation for Services (M31-01-01) and Attachment 2, Mental Status Evaluation (M31-01-02) will be filed in the medical record (Section 5) on all offenders placed on the Mental Health caseload. A copy of the Evaluations will be placed in the Mental Health record (Section 4).
4. Evaluation for Neurodevelopmental Disorder Services:
- a. All offenders scoring 70 or below on the Culture Fair Intelligence Test and offenders with a history of special education services for deficits or impairments in intellectual or adaptive functioning will be referred to the Mental Health Behavior Specialist for further screening and evaluation;

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- b. The Mental Health Behavior Specialist or Mental Health Counselor privileged in testing will administer a standardized intelligence test approved by the state Mental Health Program Supervisor/designee;
 - c. All offenders scoring 70 or below on that test will be further assessed for deficits in adaptive functioning through a clinical interview to assess Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), and a review of records;
 - d. A Licensed Psychologist will review and sign all test results/reports and determine if a diagnosis of a neurodevelopmental disability is in order;
 - e. The Mental Health Behavior Specialist or Mental Health Counselor and Psychologist will develop a treatment plan in accordance with GDC SOP 508.21, which includes any special housing or program needs requiring placement at specific facilities; and
 - f. The Mental Health Unit Manager/designee will inform Offender Administration of special housing/program needs and Mental Health classification.
5. Psychological Testing and Evaluation:
- a. Offenders will be referred for psychological testing based on but not limited to the following criteria:
 - i. Diagnostic clarification is needed;
 - ii. The offender has been referred previously and not found to need Mental Health services but continues to experience problems in general population;
 - iii. Need to facilitate the development of a treatment plan by identifying strengths and weaknesses;
 - iv. Need to assess treatment efficacy; and
 - v. To assist in development of a behavior management plan.

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- b. Before any psychological test is administered, the Psychologist will review the referral and determine which tests should be administered to best address the questions asked;
 - c. Under the direction of the Psychologist, the Mental Health Behavior Specialist or Mental Health Counselor who are privileged in test administration, may be assigned to administer and score assessments;
 - d. The Psychologist will write a Psychological Assessment Report within fourteen (14) working days of receiving the referral, answering the specific questions asked in the Mental Health Referral and making appropriate recommendations; and
 - e. All tests will be maintained on file in the Mental Health record (Section 4 or if no Mental Health record exists, in the medical record (Section 5).
6. Parole Board Requests for Parole Psychological Evaluations:
- a. The Board of Pardons and Parole will send requests for parole psychological evaluations to the Mental Health Unit Manager; and
 - b. The Mental Health Unit Manager will be responsible for scheduling these evaluations to be conducted by a Qualified Mental Health Professional.
7. Parole psychological evaluations can be performed by master's level Mental Health care providers who are not assigned as Mental Health counselor to the offender unless otherwise requested by Parole.
- a. A psychologist who has a doctoral degree and is currently licensed by the Georgia Board of Examiners as an Applied Psychologist will evaluate offenders serving a life sentence or a sentence due to a sexual abuse charge.
 - b. The Mental Health Unit Manager will ensure that reports are returned to the Parole Board within 30 days of the receipt of the request for evaluation.
 - c. A log, Attachment 4, Parole Evaluation (M31-01-04) will be established at each Mental Health unit to track parole psychological evaluations. The following information will be logged:

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- i. The offender's name and GDC number;
- ii. Date of receipt of request for evaluation;
- iii. Name and title of the evaluator;
- iv. Date evaluation conducted; and
- v. Date the report is submitted to Parole.

V. Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Mental Health Evaluation for Services (M31-01-01)
- Attachment 2: Mental Status Evaluation (M31-01-02)
- Attachment 3: Authorization for Release of Information (M31-01-03)
- Attachment 4: Parole Evaluation Log (M31-01-04)
- Attachment 5: Requested Records Log (M31-01-05)
- Attachment 6: Parole Board Evaluations (M31-01-06)

VI. Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:

Upon completion, Attachments 1, 2, 3, and 6 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 10 years. Attachments 4 and 5 shall be maintained in the mental health area for 10 years.