



MEDICAL ASSISTANCE BULLETIN
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA * DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

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November 9, 2002

SUBJECT: Elimination of the Requirement for the Outpatient Drug and Alcohol Clinic's Supervisory Physician to Perform a Comprehensive Medical Examination Within 15 Days Following the Intake and Before the Provision of Treatment

BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David S. Feinberg".

David S. Feinberg
Deputy Secretary for Medical Assistance Programs

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to inform outpatient drug and alcohol clinic providers that the Department of Public Welfare (Department) has amended Medical Assistance (M A) Regulations § 1223 Outpatient Drug and Alcohol Clinic Services in order to allow drug and alcohol treatment services to be more efficiently and expeditiously provided by:

1. Eliminating the requirement for the outpatient drug and alcohol clinic's supervisory physician to perform a comprehensive medical examination within 15 days following the intake and before the provision of treatment.
2. Requiring a level of care assessment for each patient prior to admission to the clinic and the provision of treatment by a Drug and Alcohol Addictions Professional (DAAP).
3. Requiring, within 15 days following intake, the clinic's supervisory physician to review and verify each patient's level of care assessment, psychosocial evaluation and initial treatment plan prior to the provision of any treatment beyond the 15th day following intake. If this condition is not met, payment will not be made for outpatient drug and alcohol clinic services.
4. Requiring a physician to perform a comprehensive medical examination or psychiatric evaluation, when medically necessary, as indicated by the level of care assessment or the clinic's supervisory physician's review.

SCOPE:

This bulletin applies to outpatient drug and alcohol clinics enrolled in the M A Program under the fee-for-service and managed care delivery systems. This bulletin does not apply to methadone maintenance clinics, which continue to be subject to the requirements found in Title 55 P a.Code § 1223.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:

Providers, consumers, advocacy groups and Department of Health (DOH) officials have worked closely with the Department in establishing this regulatory change based on current DOH requirements relating to staff qualifications for drug and alcohol clinics in 28 P a.Code §§ 704.6--704.8 (relating to qualifications for the position of clinical supervisor; qualifications for the position of counselor; and qualifications for the position of counselor assistant). These staff requirements ensure that individuals who seek drug and alcohol services are initially assessed and determined to require treatment by professionally trained staff, without the need for a comprehensive medical examination by a physician. This regulatory change benefits M A recipients by allowing drug and alcohol treatment services to be more efficiently and expeditiously provided. As a result, the requirement for an outpatient drug and alcohol clinic's supervisory physician to perform a comprehensive medical examination within 15 days following intake, and before the provision of treatment is being eliminated.

Based on the DOH regulatory standards relating to drug and alcohol clinic staffing qualifications, the Department was requested to reexamine the M A regulations requiring the clinic's supervisory physician to perform the comprehensive medical examination. Based on input from consumers, providers and advocacy groups, the Department determined that § 1223.52(a)(6) created unnecessary barriers to expedient drug and alcohol clinic services. The Department also considered and adopted the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society's recommendation, to provide payment for a comprehensive medical examination or psychiatric evaluation by a physician, subject to the limitations currently established in § 1223, when either the level of care assessment or the physician's review indicates the need.

This regulatory change does not apply to methadone maintenance clinics because of requirements established in 42 CFR 8.12(f)(2) (relating to Federal opioid treatment standards). Federal regulations require a comprehensive medical examination be performed for each M A recipient before dispensing methadone to the M A recipient.

On October 24, 2002, the Independent Regulatory Review Commission approved the amended regulations to the M A policy for outpatient drug and alcohol clinics. The regulations were effective upon publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on November 9, 2002.

NEXT STEPS:

Please replace all pages of § 1223 in the policy section of your Medical Assistance Handbook with pages III-51-63 attached to this bulletin.

ATTACHMENT:

- CHAPTER 1223. Outpatient Drug and Alcohol Clinic Services

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

The appropriate toll-free number for your provider type.

Visit the Office of Medical Assistance Programs website at www.dpw.state.pa.us/omap.