

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



Standard Operating Procedures

Policy Name: Mental Health Organization and Administration

Policy Number: 508.01

Effective Date: 7/27/2023

Page Number: 1 of 17

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 a system is in place to facilitate the effective and efficient delivery of treatment services to offenders with serious mental illness. Central office mental health administration is charged with the responsibility of providing oversight, support, and technical assistance to the facility-based Mental Health Programs. The latter are charged with the responsibility of providing Mental Health Services to offenders with serious mental illness. Both central office and facility based Mental Health Programs operate in compliance with GDC Mental Health Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). This procedure is applicable to all GDC facilities with a mental health mission.

II. Authority:

- A. GDC SOP: 104.61 Performance Management; and
- B. ACA Standards: 5-ACI-6B-02 (Mandatory) and 5-ACI-6D-04.

III. Definitions:

- A. **Chief Psychologist** - GDC employee hired by the Statewide Mental Health Director to oversee the clinical services provided within the Mental Health Programs, via audits, clinical training and other clinical activities associated with the provision of Mental Health Services in GDC facilities.
- B. **Clinical Director** - A psychologist hired by the contract vendor to provide clinical direction and oversight to the facility's Mental Health Program/team.
- C. **Mental Health Offenders** - Justice-involved individuals assessed to have a mental health disorder by either a psychologist, psychiatrist, or Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) and placed on the mental health caseload to receive Mental Health Services. They receive Mental Health Services apart from offenders who are deemed as not having symptoms at a level serious enough to receive a mental health diagnosis.

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- D. **Mental Health Program/Mental Health Team** - Comprehensive Mental Health Services provided by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals to include the Clinical Director, Mental Health Unit Manager, psychologists, psychiatrists, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), mental health nurses, mental health counselors, mental health technicians, activity therapists, multifunctional correctional officers, forensic peer mentors and other GDC staff involved in the care and treatment of offenders.
- E. **Mental Health Services** - the use of a variety of psychosocial and pharmacological therapies, either individual or group, including biological, psychological, and social, to alleviate symptoms, attain appropriate functioning and prevent relapse.
- F. **Mental Health Unit Manager (MHUM)** - A master's level mental health professional approved by the contract vendor to provide administrative direction and oversight to the facility's Mental Health Program. At smaller units, there will be an assigned "Lead Counselor" to act as a unit manager.
- G. **Privileged** - The mental health staff that are approved by the psychologist to perform Mental Health Services/tasks based on mental health training and experience.
- H. **Program Consultant or Social Services Manager** - GDC employees hired by the Statewide Mental Health Director to provide oversight and technical assistance to mental health staff. Oversight is also provided for mental health-related training, offender grievances, audits, and any mental health-related activity.
- I. **Statewide Mental Health Director** - GDC employee hired by the Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Health Services to oversee the development and implementation of comprehensive Mental Health Services within facilities across the state.

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- J. **Suicide Prevention Specialist** - A psychologist and GDC employee hired by the Statewide Mental Health Director to oversee suicide prevention activities, committees, and the completion of psychological autopsies.
- K. **Supportive Living Unit (SLU)** - Separate housing for offenders who are identified with a moderate to severe mental illness and considered vulnerable to victimization if housed in the general population.
- L. **Vendor Program Manager** - Hired by GDC-assigned company and contracted to hire and administratively supervise mental health staff for the provision of Mental Health Services within GDC facilities.

IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:

- A. Central Office Mental Health Service Administration:
 - 1. Central office Mental Health Services under the direction of the Statewide Mental Health Director is responsible for developing, implementing, and overseeing a comprehensive system of Mental Health Services to treat offenders with mental illness in accordance with GDC policy and procedures and professional standards of care.
 - 2. Central office mental health staff will manage, coordinate, and monitor the statewide GDC mental health budget. Resources will be allocated to mental health facilities based on identified mental health needs and facility mental health missions.
 - 3. Central office Mental Health Services will develop, implement, and monitor a statewide mental health continuous quality improvement (CQI) program to ensure:
 - a. The mental health service delivery system adheres to and operates in accordance with mental health standard operating procedures.

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- b. An appropriate level of care is being provided.
 - c. Resources are being well utilized; and
 - d. Needs are being identified and addressed.
4. Central office mental health staff will provide an advisory function through the appropriate chain of command to GDC officials at all levels to keep them apprised of any problems or needs within Mental Health Services based on GDC standard operating procedures.
5. Central office mental health staff will be responsible for establishing appropriate liaison with other agencies and organizations whose activities affect the delivery of Mental Health Programs in the correctional system.

B. Organizational Structure of Facility Mental Health Units:

- 1. The delivery of Mental Health Services will be in accordance with standards, policies and procedures established by central office mental health administrators and contained in statewide mental health standard operating procedures and in mental health directives.
- 2. The Mental Health Unit Manager will be responsible for maintaining a current organizational chart showing reporting lines of authority. The organizational chart will have positions and names of all mental health staff members.
- 3. Mental Health Programs will come under the direct operational authority of the deputy warden of care and treatment at the facility level. The deputy warden of care and treatment will administratively supervise the Mental Health Unit Manager, directly and in collaboration with the contracted Vendor Program Manager/designee. The Mental Health Unit Manager will administratively supervise all mental health staff. The Clinical Director in collaboration with the Mental Health Unit Manager will determine the program

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clinical needs and both develop and oversee clinical services to meet those needs.

- a. The deputy warden of care and treatment will collaborate with the contract Vendor Program Manager/designee on evaluations of the contract vendor-employed Mental Health Unit Manager.
 - b. The contract Vendor Program Manager/designee and Mental Health Unit Manager will ensure annual performance reviews are conducted on all mental health staff.
 - c. In facilities that do not have a Mental Health Unit Manager or a Lead Counselor, the contract vendor/program manager/designee will administratively supervise and complete annual performance appraisal reports on the mental health staff. This is in collaboration with the deputy warden of care and treatment or assistant superintendent.
4. At probation detention centers, to include the probation substance abuse treatment center and integrated treatment facilities, the Mental Health Program will come under the direct operational authority of the assistant superintendent.
 5. The contract vendor will be involved in the interviewing and selection process of the Mental Health Unit Manager positions. The hiring of mental health staff is also subject to the approval of the warden/designee. All administrative decisions regarding work schedules, job duties, use of leave, etc. are established by the contract vendor, but are subject to the approval of the deputy warden of care and treatment or designee.
 6. The Mental Health Unit Manager will be responsible for the overall 24-hour per day operation of the Mental Health Program under the direction of the deputy warden of care and treatment. The Mental Health Unit Manager will operate in accordance with department policies and procedures.

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7. The Mental Health Unit Manager will be responsible for the administrative supervision of the staff. These staff positions and responsibilities include:
 - a. Mental Health Counselor or Mental Health Technician - Under the administrative direction and supervision of the Mental Health Unit Manager and clinical direction of a licensed psychologist, the Mental Health Counselor/Mental Health Technician's duties consist of but are not limited to the following:
 - (1) Supportive Counseling.
 - (2) Psycho-educational groups.
 - (3) Liaison with security and other disciplines.
 - (4) Attendance at mental health staff meetings, case conferences, in-service training, treatment team meetings, suicide prevention committee meetings and other trainings.
 - (5) Contribution to the establishment of a therapeutic environment.
 - (6) Individual or group psychotherapy.
 - (7) On-Call duties.
 - (8) Maintenance of required documentation.
 - (9) Crisis intervention.
 - (10) Case management as needed (with the assistance of multifunctional correctional officers, when available).
 - (11) Discharge planning; and

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(12) Certain clinical evaluations (if Privileged).

- b. Multifunctional Correctional Officers, assigned to a mental health unit are members of the Mental Health Treatment Team. These officers must complete mandated mental health training.
- c. Mental Health Multifunctional Correctional Officers are assigned to the mental health unit, but primarily used for Levels III and IV Mental Health Offenders. Under the administrative direction and supervision of the Mental Health Unit Manager in collaboration with the deputy wardens of care and treatment and security, and the clinical direction of a licensed psychologist, the Mental Health Multifunctional Correctional Officer's duties consist of but are not limited to:

(1) Case management duties.

(2) Escort offenders to mental health appointments.

(3) Attendance at mental health staff meetings, case conferences, in-service training, treatment team meetings, suicide prevention committee meetings and other trainings.

(4) Maintenance of required documentation.

(5) Liaison with other security staff and disciplines.

(6) Attendance at required MFCO trainings.

(7) Serve as an offender advocate during disciplinary hearings.

(8) Investigation of grievances.

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(9) Complete Social Security Disability applications for appropriate Mental Health Offenders; and

(10) Discharge Planning.

d. Activity Therapist - Under the administrative direction and supervision of the Mental Health Unit Manager and clinical direction of a licensed psychologist or the contract vendor's activity therapist supervisor, the Activity Therapist's duties consist of but are not limited to:

(1) Completion of activity therapy assessments.

(2) Attendance at mental health staff meetings, case conferences, in-service training, treatment team meetings, suicide prevention committee meetings and other trainings.

(3) Organization of group and individual activities.

(4) Establishment of individualized goals and objectives for each activity to meet offender needs.

(5) Maintenance of required documentation.

(6) Conduct program evaluation.

(7) Maintenance of activity therapy equipment/supplies.

(8) Supervision of activity therapist volunteers/ interns.

(9) Conduct leisure counseling/education; and

(10) Attendance at required activity therapist trainings.

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- e. Psychiatrist - Under the administrative direction of the Mental Health Unit Manager and clinical direction of the Contract Vendor's Chief Psychiatrist, the psychiatrist duties consist of but are not limited to:
- (1) Providing medication management.
 - (2) Conducting mental health emergency evaluations.
 - (3) Provide monthly consultation for APRN's and mental health nurses.
 - (4) Conducting routine psychiatric evaluations in response to referral/consultation requests.
 - (5) Making rounds in Level V Crisis Stabilization Units and Level V Acute Care Units.
 - (6) Attendance at mental health staff meetings, case conferences, in-service training, treatment team meetings, suicide prevention committee meetings and other trainings.
 - (7) Attending Level III/IV Supportive Living Unit community meetings; and
 - (8) Maintaining all required documentation.
- f. Psychologist - Under the administrative direction of the Mental Health Unit Manager, and the clinical direction of the Contract Vendor's Chief Clinical Director, the psychologist's duties may include –but are not limited to:
- (1) Clinical oversight of the Mental Health Program.
 - (2) Facilitating and co-facilitating therapeutic groups.
 - (3) Providing individual psychotherapy.

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- (4) Performing psychological testing and interpretation.
 - (5) Providing clinical consultation and supervision.
 - (6) Providing crisis intervention.
 - (7) Leading Treatment Team meetings.
 - (8) Performing diagnostic and other clinical evaluations.
 - (9) Attending Level III/IV Supportive Living Unit community meetings.
 - (10) Attendance at mental health staff meetings, case conferences, in-service training, treatment team meetings, suicide prevention committee meetings and other trainings.
 - (11) Provide weekly oversight of offenders on suicide precaution.
 - (12) Maintaining all required documentation.
 - (13) Developing/implementing groups and involved in program development.
 - (14) Participating in the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) [SOP 508.11] and Utilization Review (UR) [SOP 508.13] programs; and
 - (15) Conducting Acute Care Unit rounds.
- g. Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) - Under the administrative supervision of the Mental Health Unit Manager and the clinical supervision of a psychiatrist or the Chief Psychiatrist, APRN duties consist of but are not limited to:

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- (1) Providing medication management.
 - (2) Conducting mental health emergency evaluations.
 - (3) Conducting routine psychiatric evaluations in response to referral/consultation requests.
 - (4) Making rounds in Level V Crisis Stabilization Units and Level V Acute Care Units.
 - (5) Participating in appropriate committee/administration meetings.
 - (6) Attending Level III/IV Supportive Living Unit community meetings.
 - (7) Attending mental health staff meetings, in-services, and case conferences.
 - (8) Participating in individual treatment team meetings/staffings; and
 - (9) Maintaining all required documentation.
- h. Under the administrative direction of the Mental Health Unit Manager and the Director of Nursing, and clinical consultation/supervision by the psychologist/psychiatrist, Mental Health Nurse's duties consist of but are not limited to:
- (1) Assisting psychiatrists by ensuring that medication orders are followed.
 - (2) Providing patient education regarding medication.

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- (3) Managing mental health medication compliance including reporting compliance behavior to the Mental Health Team, including psychiatrists.
- (4) Attendance at mental health staff meetings, case conferences, in-service training, treatment team meetings, suicide prevention committee meetings and other trainings.
- (5) Serving as a liaison with physical health staff.
- (6) Maintaining required documentation.
- (7) Participating in CQI.
- (8) Facilitating psycho-educational groups; and
- (9) Providing weekly non-adherence documentation to the Mental Health Unit Manager.

C. Levels of Mental Health Staffing:

1. The Vendor will provide appropriately credentialed staff in adequate numbers commensurate with the established mission and level of mental health care being provided at each mental health unit. The needs of the offender population and the level of services being provided will determine the number and type of staff for each Mental Health Program. The highest needs are found at Specialized Behavioral Therapeutic Units, Under Death Sentence (UDS), Specialized Management Unit (SMU), Crisis Stabilization Unit/Acute Care Unit (CSU/ACU), Specialized Mental Health Treatment Units (SMHTUs/TIER II, etc.) and Level IV Supportive Living Units. The next priority is Level III Supportive Living Units. The lowest priority is Level II outpatient programs.

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2. Central Office (GDC and Vendor) will review the staffing plan annually to determine if the number and type of staff is adequate to perform the Mental Health Services' mission(s).
3. At all programs, the first full time equivalent (FTE) psychiatric position will be filled by a psychiatrist. Any hours above that first full time equivalent (FTE) may be filled by an APRN. General guidelines for staffing are as follows and may be modified as needed by the Statewide Mental Health Director:
 - a. 1 FTE Mental Health Unit Manager.
 - b. 1 Clinical Director.
 - c. Mental health counselors, number of positions will be determined by the following ratios:
 - (1) Level II Ratios:
 - a) There will be at least 1.0 FTE Mental Health Counselor per 75 level II offenders at medium security facilities; and
 - b) There will be at least 1.0 FTE Mental Health Counselor per 60 level II offenders at close security facilities.
 - (2) Level III Ratios:
 - a) There will be at least 1.0 FTE Mental Health Counselor per 50 level III offenders at medium security facilities; and
 - b) There will be at least 1.0 FTE Mental Health Counselor per 40 level III offenders at close security facilities.

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(3) Level IV Ratios:

There will be at least 1.0 FTE Mental Health Counselor per 25 level IV offenders.

(4) Level V Ratios:

There will be at least 1.0 FTE Mental Health Counselor per 15 offenders housed in Crisis Stabilization Unit/Acute Care Units (CSU/ACU); and

(5) SMHTU/TIER II Ratios:

There will be at least 1.0 FTE Mental Health Counselor per 20 offenders at designated SMHTU/TIER II facilities.

d. Mental health technicians' ratios will be similar to the mental health counselors but will be determined by their clinical supervisors.

e. Mental Health Nurses, number of positions will be determined by the following ratios:

(1) Level II Ratios: 1:200.

(2) Level III/IV Ratios: 1:150; and

(3) There will be at least 6 mental health nurses (4 RNs and 2 LPNs) full time equivalents (FTE) per Crisis Stabilization Unit/Acute Care Unit (CSU/ACU).

i. Activity Therapists - Activity therapists will be assigned to Supportive Living Unit Mental Health Programs and other programs according to need. The highest needs are found at Specialized Behavioral Therapeutic

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Units (UDS, SMU, CSU/ACU, SMHTUs/TIER II, etc.), Level IV Supportive Living Units, elderly and physically challenged. The next priority is Level III Supportive Living Units.

- j. Multifunctional Correctional Officers - Multifunctional Correctional Officers will be assigned to mental health units with a Supportive Living Unit/SMHTUs/TIER IIs/Integrated Treatment Facilities/Juvenile Units.
- k. Clerical Support - Each Mental Health Program will have adequate clerical support.

4. Staffing for Diagnostic Programs:

- a. Will have at least 1.0 FTE behavior specialist, mental health counselor and/or mental health technician who is credentialed and Privileged to perform test administration.
- b. Will have at least 1.0 FTE additional mental health counselor for the female diagnostic facility and 3 FTE additional mental health counselors and/or mental health technicians for the male diagnostic facility.
- c. Will have at least 0.5 FTEs additional psychologists for the female diagnostic facility and 2 FTEs additional psychologists for the male diagnostic facility.
- d. Will have at least 0.5 additional psychiatric FTEs for the female diagnostic facility and 1.0 additional psychiatric FTEs for the male diagnostic facility; and
- e. Staffing will be adjusted based on any significant changes in diagnostic volume.

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5. Oversight:

- a. The Mental Health Unit Manager will ensure that oversight procedures are in place. The Mental Health Unit Manager will ensure that appropriate staff utilizes the SCRIBE system to include, but not be limited to the following:
 - i. Mental Health caseload summary.
 - ii. Mental Health caseload by counselor.
 - iii. Diagnoses and levels of care.
 - iv. Mental Health staff schedules.
 - v. Treatment plan tickler; and
 - vi. Daily lock down.

D. Process for Resolution of Clinical Conflict:

1. The provision of treatment and habilitation services to offenders with mental illness frequently present unique problems in regard to treatment, security, and management issues. While mental health care providers maintain the freedom to exercise their professional judgment, this must be done with regard for the security and/or management of the institution. In the event professional differences arise, the following steps will be followed to resolve the issue(s):
 - a. The first level of resolution will be with the treatment team or appropriate members thereof in concert with other staff responsible for the issue(s) involved.

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- b. If the resolution cannot be achieved at the treatment team level, the Clinical Director in concert with the Mental Health Unit Manager will resolve the issues.
- c. If the resolution cannot be achieved between the Clinical Director in concert with the Mental Health Unit Manager, the regional Program Development Consultant, the Chief Clinical Director, the Chief Psychiatrist and/or Central Office management should be consulted, as relevant and appropriate.
- d. Clinical decisions are the sole province of the responsible mental health practitioner and are not countermanded by non-clinicians.

E. Inter-departmental Collaboration:

- 1. Certain issues and concerns may require inter-departmental collaboration to resolve.
 - a. Initial resolution should be pursued between the departmental managers.
 - b. As relevant and appropriate, the departmental managers will inform institutional leadership.
 - c. As relevant and appropriate, the mental health departmental managers will inform the Office of Health Services.

V. Attachments: None.

VI. Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy: None.