

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



Standard Operating Procedures

Policy Name: Transfer of Offenders with Serious Mental Illness

Policy Number: 508.33

Effective Date: 2/18/2021

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) to ensure the prompt and continuous delivery of mental health care to offenders with serious mental illness when they are transferred from one facility to another. The mental health record will be handled in a confidential manner during the transfer. Mental health transfers will be coordinated through the office of GDC's Offender Administration in accordance with standard operating procedures and will follow procedures as specified by federal, state, and local law. This procedure is applicable to all GDC facilities with a mental health mission.

II. Authority:

- A. GDC SOPs: 103.63 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II Provisions, 220.05 Diagnostic Reception, Orientation and Processing, and 508.25 Psychiatric Hospitalization; and
- B. ACA Standards: 4-ALDF-4C-23, 5-ACI-6A-05 (ref. 4-4348), 5-ACI-6A-32 (ref. 4-4371, Mandatory) 5-ACI-6C-12 (ref. 4-4404), 5-ACI-6A-22 (ref. 4-4363), and 5-ACI-6D-06, (ref. 4-4414).

III. Definitions:

- A. **Serious Mental Illness** - A substantial disorder of thought or mood which significantly impairs judgment, behavior, capacity to recognize reality or cope with the ordinary demands of life within the prison environment and which is manifested by emotional pain or cognitive challenges. Serious mental illness requires a mental health diagnosis, prognosis and treatment, as appropriately determined by mental health clinicians.
- B. **Mental Health Record** - The offender-specific GDC mental health file which contains all mental health assessments, diagnoses, treatment plans, summaries, progress notes, psychological testing results, psychiatrist's/advanced practice registered nurse's (APRN's) orders, laboratory reports, pertinent physical information, and all other information pertaining to the offender's mental health treatment.

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C. **Medical Record** - The offender-specific GDC medical file which contains all medical information pertaining to the offender's physical health including laboratory reports, medical orders, to include psychiatrist's/APRN's orders, and psychiatric documentation. In addition, in section five (5) of the medical record there will be the most current mental health diagnosis list, mental health treatment plan, psychological documentation and sexual allegation evaluations.

IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:

A. Mental Health Diagnostic Transfer Procedures or Diagnostic Permanent Assignments:

1. Once the mental health evaluation is completed and the mental health level is assigned by the upper level provider on an offender in the diagnostic process, the mental health unit manager/designee will enter the mental health level into the appropriate computer tracking system, such as Scribe.
2. The mental health level and other profile information will be made a part of the diagnostic and classification packet that is sent to the GDC's Offender Administration when the offender has completed the diagnostic process.
3. Offender Administration is responsible for the transfer of all offenders who have completed the diagnostic process, to an appropriate GDC facility for permanent assignment, based on the offender's needs and as space is available. The offender on the mental health caseload may only be transferred to a GDC facility with an equivalent or higher level of mental health care to that indicated on the offender's mental health profile listed in Scribe. Accommodations will be ensured for offenders with disabilities.

B. Transfer Procedures for Mental Health Referrals/Admissions:

1. A referral for a mental health evaluation will be arranged between a facility without a mental health unit and the catchment area facility with a mental health unit. The facility with the mental health unit will arrange either for a qualified mental health professional to evaluate the offender at the facility or for the

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offender to be brought to the mental health facility on sleeper status. The offender will be held at the mental health facility pending completion of a mental health evaluation. If possible and if appropriate, the evaluation can and should be arranged as a day evaluation or a tele-mental health evaluation when the offender is in need of a mental health evaluation for services. When the offender is sent to an evaluating site the medical and institutional records will also be sent.

2. If the disposition of the mental health evaluation is that the offender is in need of mental health services, the following actions will be taken:
 - a. The mental health unit manager at the evaluating facility will contact Offender Administration by phone or email, advise them of the situation and get direction in terms of where bed space is both appropriate and available and when a transfer can occur.
 - b. The mental health unit manager/designee will contact the referring facility by phone, advise them of the offender's status, and instruct them on how to enter a transfer request for mental health reasons in the computer to initiate the formal transfer process.
 - c. If space is available, the evaluating facility will hold the offender as a sleeper until the transfer occurs. If this is not possible, the mental health unit manager at the evaluating site and Offender Administration will collaborate in locating a temporary holding site until the transfer occurs. If this cannot be resolved, the mental health unit manager will contact central office mental health leadership for direction.
 - d. Once Offender Administration is able to arrange a transfer of an offender on the mental health caseload, Offender Administration will notify the referring, holding, and receiving facilities of the transfer. The holding facility will arrange for the offender, their personal property and records to be transferred by the regular GDC transportation system unless special arrangements (e.g. admission/discharge from ACU/CSU) have been made for the transport. The referring facility will arrange for the offender's personal property and account to be transferred to the receiving facility.

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3. If an offender in an integrated treatment facility (ITF) or probation detention center (PDC) is in need of supportive living unit housing and must be housed at a state prison with a mental health unit, the offender will be held on sleeper status as long as they remain at the state prison. If necessary, the mental health unit manager will advise Offender Administration that they are housing a detainee or probationer. The designated staff at the ITF or PDC will remain responsible for coordinating transportation when the detainee or probationer on sleeper status is ready for discharge from the state prison.

C. General Transfer Procedures for Offenders on the Mental Health Caseload:

1. The mental health unit manager or a designated counselor at the sending facility will notify the receiving facility's mental health unit manager by telephonic or electronic email communication of an impending transfer of all mental health offenders. Whenever possible, this communication should occur 24 hours in advance of the transfer. In addition, this communication will be documented in the mental health Transfer Log (Attachment 2).
2. The mental health counselor or mental health technician at all sending facilities will prepare a brief summary of treatment using the Mental Health Transfer Summary (Attachment 1), which will be placed on top of section one (1) of the offender's mental health record which contains:
 - a. Current mental health diagnosis(es) and physical health diagnosis(es);
 - b. Current mental status;
 - c. Medications/involuntary medication status, if applicable;
 - d. Housing recommendations;
 - e. Treatment interventions reflecting the current treatment plan;
 - f. Summary of progress made in treatment at the sending facility; and

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g. Reason for transfer.

3. The sending facility will package the offender's mental health record(s) in a large sealed envelope to maintain confidentiality, which will accompany the offender's institutional and medical record(s) when the offender is transferred to the receiving facility.
4. An assigned mental health staff member at the receiving facility will receive the incoming offender's mental health record. The mental health unit manager/designee will review the record on the offender's day of arrival or the next business day and will arrange for the offender's mental health intrasystem transfer assessment and continuation of mental health care.
5. The current plan of care will remain in effect until reviewed and revised by the mental health treatment team at the receiving facility.

D. Transfer Procedures for Admission to and Release from a Prison Psychiatric Facility:

1. If mental health hospitalization is indicated, transfer will occur in accordance with procedures outlined in SOP 508.25 Psychiatric Hospitalization. A transfer that results in an offender's placement in a non-correctional facility or in a special unit within the facility or agency, specifically designated for the care and treatment of a person with a serious mental illness, follows due process procedures as specified by federal, state, and local law prior to the transfer to the psychiatric facility. In emergency situations, a hearing is held as soon as possible after the transfer.
2. If an offender is approved by central office for admission to a prison psychiatric facility, the sending facility is responsible for the transfer process. The transfer will be accomplished in a vehicle in which the offender is the sole offender occupant (see SOP 508.25).
3. When a GDC offender is ready for discharge from a prison psychiatric facility, an appropriate administrator from the prison psychiatric facility will notify the

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statewide mental health director/designee. Refer to the appropriate discharge procedures from a psychiatric hospitalization outlined in SOP 508.25.

V. Attachments:

Attachment 1: Mental Health Transfer Summary

Attachment 2: Transfer Log

VI. Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:

Upon completion, Attachment 1 will be placed in the offender's mental health record, section one (1). At the end of the offender's need for mental health services and/or sentence, the mental health record will be placed in the offender's health record section five (5) and retained for 10 years. Attachment 2 will be maintained in the mental health area for four (4) years.