

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



Standard Operating Procedures

Policy Name: Mental Health Evaluations

Policy Number: 507.04.50

Effective Date: 2/1/2022

Page Number: 1 of 7

Authority:
Commissioner

Originating Division:
Health Services Division
(Physical Health)

Access Listing:
Level I: All Access

I. Introduction and Summary:

A mental health evaluation of all offenders will be performed by qualified mental health personnel upon admission to the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) or when clinically indicated. This policy is applicable to all facilities that house GDC offenders, which includes the private and county prisons.

II. Authority

A. Ga. Comp. R. & Regs. R.: 125-4-5-.01 and 125-4-4-04;

B. NCCHC 2018 Adult Standard for Health Services: P-E-05;

C. GDC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): 508.14 Mental Health Reception Screen, 508.15 Mental Health Evaluations, 508.19 Mental Health Referral and Triage, 508.24 Psychotropic Medication Use Management, 508.28 Managing Potentially Suicidal, Self-Injurious, and Assaultive Behavior, 507.04.85 Informed Consent, and 508.33 Transfer of Offenders with Serious Mental Illness; and

D. ACA Standards: 5-ACI-4A-27, 5-ACI-5D-09, 5-ACI-6A-01, 5-ACI-6A-06, 5-ACI-6A-07, 5-ACI-6A-24, 5-ACI-6A-29, and 4-ALDF-4C-31;

III. Definitions:

A. **Expressive Violence** - Violence initiated as a result of an interpersonal altercation, where the goal is to injure the other person.

B. **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 who, by virtue of their education, credentials and experience

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are permitted by law to evaluate and care for the mental health needs of offenders.

- C. **Serious Mental Illness** - A substantial disorder of thought or mood that significantly impairs judgement, 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 Illnesses include, but are not limited to, major mood disorders (i.e., bipolar disorder, major depression), psychotic disorders (i.e., schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder), PTSD, gender dysphoria, juveniles housed at adult facilities and any disorders involving suicide attempts, suicidal plans, suicidal thoughts, or self-injurious behavior.

IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:

A. Mental Health Screening:

1. All inter-system and intra-system transfer offenders will receive an initial mental health screening at the time of admission to the facility by a Qualified Mental Health Professional. The mental health screening includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Offender Inquiry Information Questions:
 - i. Does the offender have a present suicidal ideation?
 - ii. Does the offender have a history of suicidal behavior?
 - iii. Is the offender presently prescribed psychotropic medication?
 - iv. Does the offender have a current mental health complaint?
 - v. Is the offender currently being treated for mental health problems?

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- vi. Does the offender have a history of inpatient and/or outpatient mental health treatment?
 - vii. Does the offender have a history of any recent use of alcohol or addictive substances? (Include frequency of use, amount used, and the last time used).
 - viii. Does the offender have a history of substance use disorder treatment?
- b. Observation of the Offender:
- i. General appearance and behavior.
 - ii. Level of consciousness (alertness, orientation).
 - iii. Evidence of abuse and/or trauma.
 - iv. Current symptoms of psychosis, depression, anxiety, and/or aggression.
- c. Disposition of the Offender:
- i. Toward the general population.
 - ii. Toward the general population with appropriate referral to mental health care service.
 - iii. Referral to appropriate mental health care service for emergency treatment.

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B. Mental Health Referral:

1. Offenders who are referred as a result of the mental health screening or by staff referral will receive a mental health appraisal by a Qualified Mental Health Professional within fourteen (14) days of admission to the facility or the referral.
2. If there is documented evidence of a mental health appraisal within the previous 90 days a new mental health appraisal is not required except as determined by the designated mental health authority.

C. Mental health examinations include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Review of the mental health screening.
2. Historical review of the following:
 - a. Available historical records of inpatient and outpatient psychiatric treatment.
 - b. Treatment with psychotropic medication.
 - c. Psychotherapy, psycho-educational groups, and classes or support groups.
 - d. Educational status.
 - e. Drug and alcohol use/abuse; treatment.
 - f. Sexual abuse-victimization and predatory behavior.
3. An assessment of the offender's current mental status and condition, including:

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- a. Current suicidal potential and person-specific circumstances that may increase suicide potential.
 - b. The potential for violence and person-specific circumstances that may increase the potential for Expressive Violence.
 - c. Drug and/or alcohol addiction.
 4. Use of additional assessment tools as indicated.
 5. Development and implementation of a treatment plan as indicated, including recommendations concerning housing, job assignment, and program participation.
 6. Referral to treatment as indicated.
 7. All offenders with a positive mental health screen will be referred for an emergency or routine evaluation as clinically indicated.
- D. Development of an overall treatment/management plan with appropriate referral to include transfer to mental health or catchment facility for offenders whose psychiatric needs exceed the treatment capability of the facility.
1. At facilities with a mental health unit, medical personnel will immediately refer any offenders with a history suggesting a Serious Mental Illness (see definition in Section III.C. above) or with current symptoms of a Serious Mental Illness to the mental health staff member responsible for conducting the mental health screening. Offenders with developmental disorders (i.e., mental retardation, learning disorders, communication disorders, attention-deficit disorders) or with current symptoms of mental disorders without psychosis, major mood disturbance or suicidal/self-injurious indications will be referred using the routine referral procedure in SOP 508.28, Management of Potentially Suicidal, Self- Injurious and Assaultive Behavior. All offenders

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taking psychotropic medications will be referred to the mental health staff member responsible for conducting the mental health screening.

2. At facilities without a mental health unit, medical personnel will immediately refer any offenders with a history suggesting a Serious Mental Illness (see definition in Section III.C. above) or with current symptoms of a Serious Mental Illness for an emergency evaluation at the appropriate mental health catchment facility. Offenders with developmental disorders (i.e., mental retardation, learning disorders, communication disorders, attention-deficit disorders) or with current symptoms of mental disorders without psychosis, major mood disturbance or suicidal/self-injurious indications will be referred for a routine evaluation at the appropriate mental health catchment facility. All offenders taking psychotropic medications will be referred for an emergency or routine evaluation as appropriate.
3. Documentation of the initial screening and any other pertinent mental health related information will be made in the offender's health record.

E. Mental Health Screening:

1. At facilities with a mental health unit, a Qualified Mental Health Professional will screen the offender on the day of arrival. (See SOP 508.14, Mental Health Reception Screen).
2. A mental health evaluation by a psychiatrist or psychologist will occur within 24 hours for an emergency or by a Qualified Mental Health Professional within 14 days for a routine case (See SOP 508.15, Mental Health Evaluations).
3. Offenders who, in the opinion of the Qualified Mental Health Professional, require acute mental health services beyond that available at the facility or whose adaptation to the correctional environment is significantly impaired will be transferred to an appropriate facility.

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4. A written list of mental health resources, both internal and external to the agency, will be maintained in each facility.

F. Evaluation of Offenders at Facilities Without a Mental Health Professional:

1. If an offender is exhibiting signs or symptoms of a mental health disorder at a facility with no mental health professional, arrangements will be made to transfer the offender to a facility with appropriate mental health resources in accordance with SOP 508.33, Transfer of Seriously Mentally Ill Offenders.

V. **Attachments:** None.

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