

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Chemical Dependency, Intoxication and Withdrawal

**Policy Number:** 507.04.24

**Effective Date:** 01/25/2022

**Page Number:** 1 of 4

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Health Services Division  
(Physical Health)

**Access Listing:**  
Level I: All Access

**I. Introduction and Summary:**

Offenders entering the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) will be screened for any history of prior alcohol and/or drug abuse. Offenders who may be intoxicated or experiencing withdrawal symptoms will be identified and managed in accordance with their medical needs. Subsequently, offenders will be referred for counseling. This procedure is applicable to all facilities that house GDC offenders to include private and county prisons.

**II. Authority:**

- A. Ga. Comp. R. & Regs. 125-3-1-.02(6) (c), 125-4-5-.02, 126-4-1-.06(1), and 125-2-4-.13(2) (b);
- B. GDC Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): 508.16 Mental Health Levels of Care;
- C. NCCHC 2018 Adult Standard: P-F-04; and
- D. ACA Standards: 5-ACI-6A-23, 5-ACI-6A-41, 5-ACI-6A-25 (ref. 4-4365, Mandatory), 5-ACI-6A-41 (ref. 4-4376, Mandatory), 5-ACI-6A-42 (ref. 4-4377), 5-ACI-6C-04 (ref. 4-4397, Mandatory), and 4-ALDF-4C-36.

**III. Definitions:**

- A. **Advanced Clinical Provider** - Nurse practitioner, physician assistant, physician, or dentist.
- B. **Chemical Dependency** - The state of physiological or psychological dependence on alcohol, opium derivatives and synthetic with morphine-like properties (opiates), stimulants (i.e., amphetamines, cocaine), and depressants.
- C. **Detoxification** - Refers to the process by which an individual is gradually withdrawn from a drug by the administration of decreasing doses of the drug upon which the person is physiologically or psychologically dependent. Detoxification

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in alcohol-dependent individuals does not involve administering decreasing doses of alcohol but administering decreasing doses of medications that are cross-tolerant to it.

**IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:**

**A. Chemically Dependent Offender:**

1. Upon entry to the GDC, the offender's medical history of prior alcohol and drug use will be obtained as an integral part of the receiving screening process.
2. An Advanced Clinical Provider will make the diagnosis of Chemical Dependency or substance abuse. It will be listed on the problem list identifying the type and amount of substance for which the offender gives a history of abuse (i.e., 1 case beer/day, 40-year history tobacco use).
3. Offenders with a diagnosis of Chemical Dependency or substance abuse will be referred to the Substance Abuse Treatment Program provided at the facility through referral by the offender's facility counselor.
4. Training in the recognition of signs and symptoms for Chemical Dependency will be provided for health care staff during the orientation process.

**B. Identification of Offenders Who Are Intoxicated:**

1. Offenders who are suspected to be intoxicated or experiencing symptoms of drug or alcohol withdrawal will be referred to the health care unit for evaluation of their symptoms.
2. Signs and symptoms of recent ingestion may include:
  - a. Drowsiness;

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- b. Odor of alcohol;
- c. Slurred speech;
- d. Disorientation to person, place or time/date;
- e. Lack of coordination of movements; and
- f. Change in pupil size.

**C. Management of Offenders Experiencing Acute Withdrawal:**

1. An offender exhibiting severe, life-threatening symptoms will be transferred to the nearest outside medical facility for stabilization. The following symptoms may indicate such progression:
  - a. Sweating, fever, tachycardia;
  - b. Auditory/visual hallucinations;
  - c. Nausea and vomiting;
  - d. Agitation, tremors, changes in pupil size;
  - e. Past history of drug or alcohol abuse;
  - f. Seizures;
  - g. Confusion; and
  - h. Neurological dysfunction.

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2. An offender who is exhibiting mild to moderate symptoms may be kept under observation as deemed necessary by the Advanced Clinical Provider. Progression of symptoms to a life-threatening situation will result in a transfer to an outside medical facility.
3. The Advanced Clinical Provider will determine if the offender requires pharmacological or other supportive care and will coordinate Detoxification with the facility staff.

D. Referral of Chemically Dependent Offenders:

1. Individual treatment planning will include referral to mental health and substance abuse programs within the facility when appropriate.
2. Referral to outside agencies will be made, as needed, upon the offender's release from GDC.

V. **Attachments:** None.

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