

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
HIV PLANNING GROUP**

**MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES  
SERVICE STANDARDS  
FOR RYAN WHITE CARE AND TREATMENT**

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## Mental Health Services

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### Service Category Definition

Mental health services are the provision of outpatient psychological and psychiatric screening, assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and counseling services offered to clients living with HIV. Services are based on a treatment plan, conducted in an outpatient group or individual session, and provided by a mental health professional licensed or authorized within the state to render such services. Such professionals typically include psychiatrists, psychologists, and licensed clinical social workers.

### Purpose and Goals

The goal of mental health services is to provide outpatient psychological counseling services and psychiatric screening, assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and counseling services to persons living with HIV in the least restrictive setting to improve access and retention to medically appropriate levels of care in San Diego County.

### Intake

Providers will conduct a comprehensive client intake process. This process determines a client's need for mental health services and the extent of services that need to be provided. A client intake will be completed for all clients who request or are referred to mental health services. The intake process also acquaints the client with the range of services offered and determines the client's interest in such services. Mental health services are allowable for HIV-infected clients only.

### Key Service Components and Activities

Key activities for mental health services include:

- Initial comprehensive assessment including documentation of diagnosis and determination of needs
- Development of individual treatment plans
- Treatment provision in individual, family, and/or group settings, crisis intervention and psychiatric consultation.
  - **Individual Counseling/Psychotherapy:** Frequency and duration of individual counseling or psychotherapy is determined based upon client need or as outlined in the Treatment Plan.
  - **Family and Conjoint Counseling/Psychotherapy:** The overall goal of family and conjoint counseling/psychotherapy is to help the client and his/her family improve their functioning, given the complications of living with HIV. The frequency and duration is based on upon client needs or as outline in the Treatment Plan.
  - **Group Treatment:** Group treatment can provide opportunities for increased social support vital to those isolated by HIV. Provider will assure an appropriate clinician facilitates the groups and limit the groups to a maximum of 12 persons per group (unless it is a couples-specific group).
    - Group counseling sessions consists of face-to-face contact between one or more therapists and a group of no fewer than two Ryan White eligible clients.
  - **Crisis Intervention:** This is an unplanned service provided to an individual, couple or family experiencing psychosocial stress. Crisis interventions are provided in order to prevent deterioration of functioning or to assist in the client's return to baseline functioning. Client safety will be assessed and addressed. This service may occur as often as necessary to ensure client safety and maintenance of baseline functioning.

- **Psychiatric consultation:** Providers will provide psychiatric referrals as appropriate.
- Referral/coordination/linkages
  - **Referral/Coordination:** Providers will establish linkages and collaborative relationships with other providers for client referral to ensure integration of services and better client care, including, but not limited to, additional mental health services (psychiatric evaluation and medication management, neuropsychological testing, day treatment programs and in-patient hospitalization); primary care, case management, dental treatment, and substance abuse treatment.
- Development of follow-up plans if needed
- Case closure

Standard	Measure
Staff assesses clients' eligibility and needs	Documentation of interviews and assessments all potential clients and their respective needs
Staff maintains records of eligibility, intake and assessments	Documentation of eligibility, intake, comprehensive assessments, individual care plans, and progress of clients
	Maintain a single record for each client
Staff ensures clients are connected to the appropriate services when needed	Documentation of all services provided/offered to clients

**Personnel Qualifications**

All mental health practitioners will have training and experience with HIV related issues and concerns. It is recommended that practitioners participate in continuing education and training on issues related to HIV and mental health. At a minimum, practitioners providing mental health services to people living with HIV will possess knowledge about the following:

- HIV disease process and current medical treatments
- Psychosocial issues related to HIV
- Cultural issues related to communities affected by HIV
- Mental disorders related to HIV and/or other medical conditions
- Mental disorders that can be induced by prescription drug use
- Adherence to medication regimes
- Diagnosis and assessment of HIV-related mental health issues
- HIV legal and ethical issues
- Knowledge of human sexuality, gender and sexual orientation issues
- Substance abuse theory, treatment and practice

In accordance with State licensing and practice rules and regulations, all direct services will be provided by culturally sensitive, linguistically appropriate, and competent licensed counselors or duly supervised interns.

Standard	Measure
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Standard	Measure
Staff will meet minimum qualifications	Documentation of appropriate and valid licensure and certification of mental health professionals as required by the State of California
Staff will have clear understanding of job responsibilities	Documentation of current job descriptions on file that are signed by staff and appropriate supervisors
Staff are competent	Documentation of a training plan that includes specific topics, identification of the trainer, and a timeline for all newly employed staff

### Assessment and Service Plan

**Biopsychosocial Assessment:** This is an assessment completed during a face-to-face interview in which the client's biopsychosocial history and current presentation are evaluated to determine diagnosis and treatment plan. This assessment will be provided to all persons receiving individual, family/conjoint, and/or group psychotherapy. Persons receiving crisis intervention or drop-in psychotherapy groups only do not require this assessment. The assessment will be based on clinical standards appropriate to the modality chosen with knowledge of HIV risk and harm reduction.

**Reassessments:** A reassessment is ongoing and driven by client need, such as when there is significant change in the client's status. The reassessment will be documented in the client chart.

**Treatment Plans:** Treatment plan is developed with the client and is required for persons receiving individual, family/conjoint, and/or group psychotherapy. The provider will continue to address and document existing and newly identified treatment plan goals. The Treatment Plan will include at minimum:

- Diagnosed mental illness or condition
- Treatment modality (group or individual)
- Date for mental health services
- Recommended number of sessions
- Date for reassessment
- Projected treatment end date
- Any recommendations for follow up
- Signature of the mental health professional rendering service

Regular follow-up procedures are provided to encourage and help maintain a client in treatment. The documentation of attempts to contact the client will be in the progress notes. The follow-up may include telephone calls, written correspondence, and direct contact.

Standard	Measure
Staff will assess client's condition and needs	Documentation of biopsychological assessment
Staff will develop a treatment plan. Staff will also monitor and continuously reassess clients' needs	Documentation of the existence of a detailed treatment plan for each eligible client that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The diagnosed mental illness or condition</li> <li>• The treatment modality (group or individual)</li> <li>• The start date for mental health services</li> </ul>

Standard	Measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended number of sessions</li> <li>• Date for reassessment(s)</li> <li>• Projected treatment end date,</li> <li>• Any recommendations for follow up</li> <li>• The signature of the mental health professional rendering service</li> </ul>
<p>Staff will ensure that services meet Ryan White and local guidelines and are consistent with the treatment plan</p>	<p>Documentation of service provided to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services provided are allowable under Ryan White, state and local guidelines</li> <li>• Services provided are consistent with the treatment plan</li> </ul>

**Transition and Discharge**

Clients will be disenrolled from mental health services when all action items on the individual care plan are completed and medical care is stabilized with all of the following criteria met:

- Enrolled in HIV medical care
- Following her/his medical plan since the previous assessment
- The medical plan may include other health-related issues (for example, mental health, substance abuse, smoking, hypertension, gynecological, etc.)
- Keeping medical appointments
- Taking medication as prescribed

Other criteria for disenrollment include:

- Client has died
- Client requests to be disenrolled
- Client enrolls in another mental health program
- Client cannot be located within 120 days after repeated efforts including attempted written, oral and personal contact
- Client relocates outside of San Diego County
- Client demonstrates repeated non-compliance or inappropriate behavior in violation of specific written policies of the provider especially with regard to violation of confidentiality of other client information.
- Client is incarcerated longer than 30 days
- Client does not qualify for mental health services based on eligibility requirements

Clients discharged from mental health services may still be eligible to receive assistance through mental health services if requirements are met. Clients may also be referred to other agencies or other services provided by peer workers other personnel.

Standard	Measure
<p>Staff will document reasons for disenrollment in the client record</p>	<p>Documentation of reason for disenrollment</p>

Standard	Measure
Staff will determine client eligibility for other programs and re-instatement in Ryan White mental health services	Documentation of “inactive status” and maintenance of records and contact information to facilitate rapid re-enrollment, as appropriate

**Case Closure**

Case closure is a systematic process for discharging clients from mental health services. The process includes formal client notification regarding pending case closure and the completion of a case closure summary to be maintained in the client chart. Clients are considered active providing they receive mental health services at least once within each sixty-day period. Case closure may occur for the following reasons:

- Successful attainment of mental health services goals
- Client relocation outside San Diego County
- Continued client non-adherence to treatment plan
- An inability to contact a client for 120 days
- Client-initiated termination of service
- Unacceptable client behavior or client’s health needs cannot be adequately addressed by the service

A Case Closure Summary will be completed for each client who has terminated treatment. The summary includes the following documentation:

- Course of treatment
- Discharge diagnosis
- Referrals
- Reason for termination
- Documentation of attempts to contact client, including written correspondence and results of these attempts (For those clients who drop out of treatment without notice)

Standard	Measure
Client's case is terminated when client completes their treatment plan, medical care is stabilized, client no longer needs services or is determined to be non-compliant	Completed Case Closure Summary

**Client Rights and Responsibilities**

All providers will have written policies and procedures for a complaint process. The policy will identify staff responsible, an appeal process, tracking system, follow-up procedures, and a timeline. Mental health services providers will use relevant Federal, State and County regulations for investigating and resolving complaints. A copy of the complaint policy will be conspicuously displayed. Complaints and investigation results will be forwarded to the County within 24 hours of both the receipt and resolution of the complaint.

Standard	Measure
Providers have policies regarding the rights and responsibilities of mental health services clients	Documentation of policies and procedures for a complaint process

**Grievance Process**

All mental health services providers will maintain written grievance policies. The grievance policy will be posted in a prominent location with information on how clients may also contact the County of San Diego’s HIV, STD and Hepatitis Branch (HSHB) as an alternative to completing the form. Forms inadvertently collected by providers will immediately be forwarded to the address on the form.

Mental health services providers will also post a copy of the HSHB Client Service Evaluation form (“goldenrod”) in a prominent place. Copies of the form will be available for clients upon request with a mechanism for the clients to mail the form to HSHB for review.

Standard	Measure
Clients' rights are protected and clients have access to a grievance/complaint resolution process and are made aware	Documentation of a grievance policy
Clients have the ability to file a grievance or complaint	Verification of visible goldenrod (English and Spanish) placement in client sites

**Cultural and Linguistic Competency**

Cultural competency as defined by the HIV Planning Group is: “Recognizing the differences in physical and emotional life challenges, including disabilities of all kinds, culture and ethnicity, religion and spirituality, and in histories, traditions and languages. More specifically, all providers must have the ability to provide appropriate and acceptable services to all potential and current clients, including people of color, gay men, lesbians, transsexuals, transgender individuals, former and active substance abusers, persons with mental health concerns, persons of differing abilities, and others. Providers who serve any of these groups will make reasonable accommodations in service provisions.”

All providers must include a requirement in their policies that all staff, board members and volunteers possess knowledge of the Ryan White Part A program and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Program policies and procedures regarding cultural competency will address cultural sensitivity, diversity, and inclusiveness. Policies on cultural competency are given to clients at admission and posted in a prominent place. Provider’s admission procedures will assess client access issues, including cultural needs, physical accessibility, and service location.

Providers must assess and ensure the training and competency of individuals who deliver language services to assure accurate and effective communication between clients, staff and volunteers transcend language barriers and avoid misunderstanding and omission of vital information. Staff and volunteers working directly with clients must receive a minimum of four hours of cultural sensitivity training each year.

Providers will also identify staff and volunteers who can provide bilingual/bicultural services to individuals who need or prefer to communicate in Spanish. If there are no staff members or volunteers who can perform this function, the provider will develop alternate methods to ensure language appropriate services are available. Providers will employ proactive strategies such as partnering with other local organizations to develop a diverse workforce.

Standard	Measure
Agency policies will address cultural and linguistic competency	Documentation on policies on cultural competency
Staff will comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA)	Completed form/certification on file
Staff and volunteers will receive annual training on cultural competency	Documentation of all staff/volunteer trainings on cultural competency
	Copies of the curriculum and handouts etc. kept on file (If training is provided by the provider)

Standard	Measure
Staff and volunteers are bilingual and can address the language needs of the populations they serve. If there are no appropriate bilingual people on staff, a plan is in place to ensure language needs are met	Copy of written plan to address
Provider will have written and posted materials in the appropriate languages for the communities being served are available and visible to clients	Posted documentation inspected and noted during routine site visits

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

All providers must develop written policies and procedures that address security, confidentiality, access and operations. In addition providers must ensure that:

- All physical case files are stored in a locked cabinet or room and electronic files are secured.
- All activities that relate to client data will have appropriate safeguards and controls in place to ensure information security.
- Case files not left unattended.
- Case files and records are not removed from the service site without a mental health provider’s written agreement.
- Case files and records are locked at night and not left on desks or in unlocked desk drawers.
- When a case file is removed from the central filing area, it will be booked out via a clear administrative procedure that can be traced to its temporary location.

In addition, providers will also ensure that:

- All employees and volunteers working under this agreement have signed a confidentiality agreement.
- All staff orientation materials include client confidentiality policies and procedures and indicate how they are communicated to staff and volunteers.
- All training logs and personnel files demonstrate that staff and volunteers have received adequate training on privacy and confidentiality, upon initial hire and annually thereafter. Training will address HIPAA, security measures and other topics related to client confidentiality.

All providers must ensure that written policies regarding confidentiality are presented to and signed by clients and maintained in clients’ case files. A release of Information form will also be signed by clients as needed. Prior to releasing any client information, providers must obtain written consent which includes:

- The name of the program or person permitted to make the disclosure;
- The name of the client;
- The purpose and content (kind of information to be disclosed) of the disclosure;
- Client’s signature or legal representative’s signature.

All providers will make available a private, confidential environment for clients to discuss their cases, especially when addressing fear and concern about their diagnosis and disclosure of their HIV status. Providers will inform clients that they will maintain confidentiality of other persons with HIV infection.

Standard	Measure
Staff will develop written policies and procedures	Copies of policies and procedures

Standard	Measure
that address security, confidentiality, access and operations	
All files are secured	Inspected and noted during routine site visits
All staff and volunteers have undergone a thorough background check	Documentation of background checks
Staff and volunteers will receive training on privacy and confidentiality	Documentation of all staff/volunteer trainings on privacy and confidentiality
	Copies of the curriculum and handouts etc. kept on file (If training is provided by the provider)

