



State of Louisiana
Louisiana Department of Health
Office of Behavioral Health

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 18, 2020

TO: MHR Providers

FROM: Karen Stubbs, Assistant Secretary

RE: COVID-19 Response

Mental Health Rehabilitation (MHR) services are provided as part of a comprehensive specialized psychiatric program available to Medicaid eligible children and adults with significant functional impairments resulting from at least one identified diagnosed mental health disorder. Services must be medically necessary to promote the maximum reduction of symptoms and restoration to both child and adult recipients, as determined by a physician or a fully licensed mental health professional (LMHP). In Louisiana, MHR services include the following Medicaid reimbursable services:

- Community Psychiatric Support and Treatment (CPST);
- Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR)
- Crisis Intervention (CI);
- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)
- Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Functional Family Therapy-Child Welfare (FFT-CW);
- Homebuilders®;
- Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST);

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) acknowledges the need for the continued facilitation of MHR services during the COVID-19 declared emergency. LDH is working on approval of the delivery of MHR services via telemedicine/telehealth communications. When telemedicine/telehealth is approved, we expect to allow services to be provided through the use of an interactive audio telecommunications system, e.g., telephones, without the requirement of video. Although an audio/video system is preferred, this would allow MHR providers to practice telemedicine/telehealth through telephones when appropriate. We have additionally requested approval for extending prior authorizations (PA) for outpatient specialized behavioral health services, including MHR services.

LDH will provide updates regarding approval as they are available. In addition, we will issue guidance on documentation requirements as appropriate.

LDH will not be waiving licensure or accreditation requirements for agencies providing MHR services. Providers must meet agency and staff qualifications and requirements for delivering MHR services, as established in the Medicaid Behavioral Health Services Provider Manual. Providers may access this manual under the provider manuals section at www.lamedicaid.com. Licensed mental health practitioners providing services in MHR agencies must also follow rules and regulations established by their respective professional licensing boards.

IF in-person encounters between specialized behavioral health practitioners (licensed and/or unlicensed) are considered medically necessary, and **IF** both the provider/staff member AND recipient/recipient's family agree that such encounters are necessary and safe, all providers and recipients are **strongly-advised** to adhere to practice "DO THE FIVE":

1. HANDS Wash them often
2. ELBOW Cough into it
3. FACE Don't touch it
4. FEET Stay more than 6ft apart
5. FEEL sick? Stay home

Providers are advised to limit in-person encounters only to those which are medically necessary, and should phone recipients/family **BEFORE** going to homes or community locations. Providers are strongly advised to limit in-person encounters only to those which cannot be done through telemedicine/telehealth technologies, are urgent, and are medically necessary. If such in-person visits are required for the health and safety of the member, providers should phone recipients/family **BEFORE** going to homes or community locations. At this initial telephonic communication, the provider should screen recipients/families for COVID-19 risk, exposure or symptoms, including but not limited to the following:

- Report of history of or current temperature/fever, signs and symptoms of respiratory illness and relevant travel and exposure history.
- Document the absence of any temperature/fever, shortness of breath, new or change in cough, and sore throat *prior to engaging the recipient*.
- Personnel that live in a community where community-based spread of COVID-19 is occurring, should not engage recipients if exhibiting respiratory symptoms and should be screened before engaging in recipient encounters.

The provider shall only proceed to initiate in person contact if both the provider and recipient are comfortable making in person contact. Providers should meet with each recipient/family in accord with CDC recommended social distancing guidance (example: While maintaining privacy, confidentiality and respecting conventions of HIPAA and Protected Health Information, meet recipient/family in open ventilated space, staying at least six (6) feet from recipient/family member during encounter. Consider conducting encounter outside of home/apartment.)

Providers may find more information about the coronavirus (COVID-19), including tips and resources for healthcare providers, by visiting: <http://ldh.la.gov/Coronavirus/> . Specific information for providers is located here: <http://ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/3872>