

Effective Date: 4/15/22	Policy Title: Concurrent Review Standards for Psychiatric Inpatient Hospital and Psychiatric Health Facility Services
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PURPOSE

This policy and procedure outlines the approach of the Mental Health Plan (MHP) for conducting concurrent reviews of psychiatric inpatient hospital and psychiatric health facility services. The MHP has delegated these responsibilities to Acentra Health, which is tasked with handling authorization and review functions for counties that enter into a participation agreement with the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA). Under a contract with CalMHSA, Acentra Health performs these services on behalf of participating counties in alignment with all Department of Health Services (DHCS) requirements and related Behavioral Health Information Notices.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to existing state and federal requirements, MHPs are required to operate a utilization management (UM) program that ensures beneficiaries have appropriate access to specialty mental health services (SMHS).¹ The UM program must evaluate medical necessity, appropriateness and efficiency of services provided to Medi-Cal beneficiaries prospectively, such as through prior or concurrent authorization review procedures.² Compensation to individuals or entities that conduct UM activities must not be structured so as to provide incentives for the individuals or entities to deny, limit, or discontinue medically necessary services to a beneficiary.³ MHPs must also establish and implement an ongoing comprehensive quality assessment and performance improvement program for the services it furnishes to beneficiaries.⁴ This program must include mechanisms to detect both underutilization and overutilization.⁵

Additionally, MHPs must implement and maintain arrangements or procedures that are designed to detect and prevent fraud, waste, and abuse, including maintenance of a comprehensive compliance program.⁶ MHPs are responsible for certifying that claims for all covered SMHS meet federal and state requirements.⁷ MHPs provide or arrange for the provision of SMHS to Medi-Cal beneficiaries that meet medical necessity and access criteria for SMHS, and approve, and authorize these services according to state

¹ Cal. Code Regs., tit. 9, § 1810.440(b); 42 C.F.R. § 438.210 (a)(4), (b)(1),(2)

² See MHP Contract, Ex. A, Att. 6 A1, Sec. 1.B.

³ 42 C.F.R., § 438.210(e)

⁴ 42 C.F.R., § 438.330(a)(1)

⁵ 42 C.F.R., § 438.330(b)(3)

⁶ 42 C.F.R., § 438.608(a)(1)

⁷ MHP Contract, Ex. B, Sec. 5.B; 42 C.F.R., § 433.51; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 9, §1840.112

requirements.⁸ MHPs may place appropriate limits on a service for the purpose of utilization control, provided that the services furnished are sufficient in amount, duration, or scope to reasonably achieve their purpose and that services for beneficiaries with ongoing or chronic conditions are authorized in a manner that reflects the beneficiary's ongoing need for such services and supports.⁹ Further, MHPs may not arbitrarily deny or reduce the amount, duration, or scope of a required service solely because of diagnosis, type of illness, or condition of the beneficiary.¹⁰

POLICY

Pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code section 14184.402(a), for individuals 21 years of age or older, a service is “medically necessary” or a “medical necessity” when it is reasonable and necessary to protect life, to prevent significant illness or significant disability, or to alleviate severe pain.

For individuals under 21 years of age, a service is “medically necessary” or a “medical necessity” if the service meets the standards set forth in Section 1396d(r)(5) of Title 42 of the United States Code, Section 1396d(r)(5) of Title 42 of the United States Code, including all Medicaid-coverable health care services needed to correct and ameliorate mental illness and conditions. Consistent with federal guidance, services need not be curative or completely restorative to ameliorate a mental health condition. Services that sustain, support, improve, or make more tolerable a mental health condition are considered to ameliorate the mental health condition and are thus covered as Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT).

PROCEDURE

A. Requirements Applicable to Authorization of Inpatient SMHS

MHPs may manage authorizations directly or delegate authorization functions to an administrative entity, consistent with federal law and the MHP's contract for SMHS. Where appropriate, this document will refer to the administrative entity, Acentra Health, in place of the MHP.

Acentra Health has established and implemented written policies and procedures for the authorization of psychiatric inpatient hospital services in accordance with Behavioral Health Information Notice (BHIN) BHIN 22-017 and other applicable BHINs.¹¹ Acentra Health has mechanisms in effect to ensure consistent application of review criteria for authorization decisions and consults with the requesting provider when appropriate.¹²

⁸ See State Plan, section 3, Supplement 3 to Attachment 3.1-A, page 2c; section 3, Supplement 2 to Attachment 3.1-B, page 5

⁹ 42 C.F.R., § 438.210 (a)(4)(ii)

¹⁰ 42 C.F.R., § 438.210 (a)(3)(ii)

¹¹ 42 C.F.R., § 438.210(b)(1), MHP Contract, Ex. A, Att. 12

¹² 42 CFR, § 438.210(b)(2)(i-ii)

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Authorization procedures and UM criteria are:

- Based on medical necessity and consistent with current evidence-based clinical practice guidelines, principles, and processes;
- Developed with involvement from network providers, including, but not limited to, hospitals, organizational providers, and licensed mental health professionals acting within their respective scopes of practice;
- Evaluated, and updated as necessary, and at least annually, and be disclosed to the MHP's beneficiaries and network providers.

MHPs shall comply with the following communication requirements:

- Notify DHCS and contracting providers in writing of all services that require prior or concurrent authorization and ensure that all contracting providers are aware of the procedures and timeframes necessary to obtain authorization for these services;
- Disclose to DHCS, the MHP's providers, beneficiaries and members of the public, upon request, the UM or utilization review policies and procedures that the MHP, or any entity that the MHP contracts with, uses to authorize, modify, or deny SMHS. The MHP may make the criteria or guidelines available through electronic communication means by posting them online;
- Ensure the beneficiary handbook includes the procedures for obtaining benefits, including any requirements for service authorizations and/or referrals for SMHS;¹³ and,
- Provide written notification regarding authorization decisions in accordance with the established timeframes for the type of authorization (Acentra Health will fulfill this component).

All Acentra Health's authorization procedures comply with the Parity Rule, in accordance with requirements set forth in Title 42 of the CFR, part 438.910.

For additional details regarding Acentra Health's authorization procedures please view the [Acentra Health Psychiatric Inpatient Concurrent Review Manual](#).

B. Concurrent Review for Psychiatric Inpatient Hospital Services

This concurrent review authorization process applies to all psychiatric inpatient level of care services in general acute care hospitals with psychiatric units, psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric health facilities (PHFs) certified by DHCS as Medi-Cal providers of

¹³ 42 C.F.R., § 438.10(g)(2)(iv)

inpatient hospital services. For ease of reference, general acute care hospitals, psychiatric hospitals and PHFs are collectively referred to as “hospital or PHF” below. This authorization process applies to all inpatient admissions, whether voluntary or involuntary. To the extent there is a conflict, this section supersedes California Code of Regulations, title 9, sections 1820.215, 1820.220, 1820.225 and 1820.230.

Acentra Health, hospitals and PHFs exchange protected health information by any method compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and agreed upon by both parties to the exchange, which may include fax, telephone and electronic transmission. Acentra Health will consult with the beneficiary’s treating provider as appropriate.¹⁴ While reviewing an authorization request, Acentra Health may communicate with the treating provider and the treating provider may adjust the authorization request prior to Acentra Health rendering a formal decision regarding the authorization request.

I. Admission and Authorization

a. Notification of beneficiary admission and request for treatment authorization.

Acentra Health maintains online portal access to receive admission notifications and initial authorization requests 24-hours a day and 7 days a week.¹⁵ Within 24 hours of admission of a Medi-Cal beneficiary for psychiatric inpatient hospital services, the hospital or PHF must provide Acentra Health the beneficiary’s admission orders,¹⁶ initial plan of care,¹⁷ a request to authorize the beneficiary’s treatment, and a completed face sheet.

The face sheet must include the following information (if available):

- Hospital name and address
- Patient name and DOB
- Insurance coverage
- Medi-Cal number and county of responsibility identified in the Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System
- Current address/place of residence
- Date and time of admission
- Working (provisional) diagnosis
- Date and time of admission
- Name and contact information of admitting, qualified and licensed practitioner
- Utilization review staff contact information

¹⁴ 42 C.F.R. § 438.210(b)(2)(ii)

¹⁵ Welf. & Inst. Code, § 14197.1; Health & Saf. Code, §§ 1367.01(i), 1371.4(a); Managed Care boilerplate contract Exh. A, Att. 9, provision 7 C [“Contractor shall ensure that a plan or contracting physician is available 24 hours a day to authorize Medically Necessary post-stabilization care and coordinate the transfer of stabilized Members in an emergency department, if necessary.”]

¹⁶ 42 CFR § 456.170

¹⁷ 42 CFR § 456.180; 42 CFR § 441.155

If, upon admission, a beneficiary is in a psychiatric emergency medical condition, as defined in Health & Safety Code section 1317.1(k), the time period for the hospital to request authorization shall begin when the beneficiary's condition is stabilized, as defined in Health & Safety Code section 1317.1(j). For emergency care, no prior authorization is required, following the reasonable person standard to determine that the presenting complaint might be an emergency.¹⁸

b. Review of initial authorization request.

Acentra Health will decide whether to grant, modify or deny the hospital or PHFs initial treatment authorization request and communicate the decision to the requesting hospital or PHF per managed care requirements for expedited authorizations following receipt of all information specified in I.a., above. Acentra Health must make an expedited authorization decision and provide notice as expeditiously as the member's health condition requires and not later than 72 hours after receipt of the request for services.¹⁹

II. Continued Stay Authorization

a. Continued Stay Authorization Request

When medically necessary for the beneficiary, before the end of the initial authorization period, or a subsequent authorization period, the hospital or PHF must submit a continued-stay authorization request for a specified number of days to Acentra Health. Acentra reviews and authorizes continued stay requests in increments of up to three (3) calendar days per request. Providers must submit documentation supporting medical necessity for the continued stay in accordance with established guidelines. Additional authorization requests must be submitted as needed for ongoing care

- b. Exchange of information between hospital or PHF and Acentra Health. The treating provider at the hospital or PHF may request information and records from Acentra Health needed to determine the appropriate length of stay for the beneficiary. Acentra Health may request only information from the hospital and treating provider that is reasonably necessary to decide whether to grant, modify or deny the request. The exchange of information is intended to occur flexibly, with Acentra Health and hospitals exchanging relevant client and clinical information as needed to complete concurrent review procedures and for discharge planning and aftercare support.

Clinical information to be exchanged includes:

¹⁸ Managed Care Two-Plan CCI Boilerplate ex. A, Att. 5.

¹⁹ Managed Care Two-Plan CCI Boilerplate ex. A, Att. 5

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- Current need for treatment to include involuntary or voluntary status, diagnosis, current symptoms, and current response to treatment.
 - Risk assessment to include any changes, inclusive of new indicators since initial intake assessment that reflect current risk. Examples may include protective and environmental factors and available supports that should be considered in discharge planning; updates regarding changes to suicidal and/or homicidal ideation since admission; aggression/self-harm since admission; behavioral observations; historical trauma.
 - Precipitating events if further identified or clarified by the treating hospital after Acentra Health admission notice.
 - Known treatment history as relates to this episode of care to include daily status (e.g., physician orders, daily progress notes, nursing notes, physician notes, social work notes, rounds sheet, lab results) of the treating hospital.
 - Hospital information on prior episode history that is relevant to current stay.
 - MHP information of relevant and clinically appropriate client history.
 - Medications to include medication administration records for this episode, changes in medication, response to current medication, or further recommendations.
 - Substance use information to include any changes, inclusive of new indicators since initial intake assessment. Examples may include SUD history, any recent changes in SUD, role of SUD in current diagnosis, SUD treatment goals, motivation to change SUD, and recommended SUD treatment post discharge.
 - Known medical history to include co-occurring factors that may be related to care of the psychiatric condition as detailed in admitting and/or ongoing history and physical, or medical treatment needs while admitted.
 - Treatment plan including any updates and changes to the initial treatment plan and evidence of progress or symptom management.
 - Discharge and aftercare plan to include recommended follow-up care, social, and community supports, and a recommended timeline for those activities.
 - Number of continuing stay days requested.
- c. Review of Continued Stay Authorization Request

Acentra Health will issue a decision on a hospital or PHF's continued-stay-authorization request within 24-hours of receipt of the request and all information reasonably necessary to make a determination.²⁰

The MHP remains responsible to cover the cost of each day of an inpatient hospital stay, at the applicable rate for acute psychiatric inpatient hospital services, until the requirements in paragraph 1 or 2 have been met:

1. The existing treatment authorization expires, and the hospital discharges the beneficiary (or the beneficiary's level of care in the hospital is downgraded to administrative day level while awaiting transfer), pursuant to a plan of care that is agreed upon by Acentra Health and the beneficiary's treating provider²¹; Or,
2. Acentra Health denies a hospital's continued stay authorization request and the hospital discharges the beneficiary (or the beneficiary's level of care in the hospital is downgraded to administrative day level while awaiting transfer), pursuant to a plan of care that is agreed upon by Acentra Health and the beneficiary's treating provider.²²

III. Adverse Decision, Clinical Consultation, Plan of Care, and Appeal

- a. While Acentra Health LMHPs/LPHAs will review authorization requests and issue approvals within their scope of practice, all Acentra Health decisions to modify or deny a treatment request will be made by a physician or psychologist who has appropriate expertise in addressing the beneficiary's behavioral health needs.²³ A psychologist may modify or deny a request for authorization for treatment for a patient only if a psychologist admitted the patient to the hospital. A psychologist may modify or deny a request for authorization for treatment consistent with the psychologist's scope of practice.
- b. A decision to modify an authorization request will be provided to the treating provider(s), initially by telephone or facsimile, and then in writing, and will include a clear and concise explanation of the reasons for Acentra Health's decision, a description of the criteria or guidelines used, and the clinical reasons for the decisions regarding medical necessity. The decision will also include the name and direct telephone number of the professional who made

²⁰ Welf. & Inst. Code 14197.1 [MCPs in practice issue a decision on a continued stay authorization request within 24 hours of receipt of the request]; See Also Health & Saf. Code, §1367.01(h)(2) specifying the timeframe for a decision begins ["after the plan's receipt of the information reasonably necessary and requested by the plan to make the determination."]

²¹ Welf. & Inst. Code 14197.1; Health & Saf. Code, § 1367.01(h)(3)

²² Welf. & Inst. Code 14197.1; Health & Saf. Code, § 1367.01(h)(3)

²³ 42 C.F.R. § 438.210(b)(3); Welf. & Inst. Code 14197.1; Health & Saf. Code, § 1367.01(e)

the authorization decision and offer the treating provider the opportunity to consult with the professional who made the authorization decision.²⁴

- c. If Acentra Health modifies or denies an authorization request, Acentra Health will notify the beneficiary in writing of the adverse benefit determination via a Notice of Adverse Benefit Determination (NOABD) before the hospital discontinues inpatient psychiatric hospital services.²⁵ The notice to the beneficiary will meet the requirements pertaining to notices of adverse benefit determinations.²⁶
- d. If Acentra Health denies a hospital's authorization request, Acentra Health must work with the treating provider to develop a plan of care. Services and payment for services shall not be discontinued until the beneficiary's treating provider(s) has been notified of Acentra Health's decision and a care plan has been agreed upon by the treating provider that is appropriate for the medical, including behavioral health, needs of the beneficiary.²⁷ If Acentra Health and treating hospital provider do not agree on a plan of care, the provider, may, on behalf of the beneficiary and with the beneficiary's written consent,²⁸ appeal the denial to Acentra Health, as provided for in the notice of adverse benefit determination. The hospital may provide the adverse benefit determination to the beneficiary after receiving notice from Acentra Health.
- e. Acentra Health's denial of an authorization request and a consultation between the treating provider and Acentra Health may result in one of the following outcomes:
 - Acentra Health and the hospital treating provider agree that the beneficiary shall continue inpatient treatment at the acute level of care, and the denial is reversed.
 - Acentra Health and the hospital treating provider agree to discharge the beneficiary from the acute level of care and a plan of care is established prior to the beneficiary transitioning services to another level of care.
 - Acentra Health and the hospital treating provider agree to discharge orders and plan of care is established; however, appropriate outpatient or step-down facility bed is not available, and the beneficiary remains in the hospital, on administrative day level of care.

²⁴ Welf. & Inst. Code 14197.1; Health & Saf. Code, § 1367.01(h)(4)

²⁵ 42 C.F.R. § 438.404(c), 42 C.F.R. § 431.213(c)

²⁶ See generally 42 C.F.R., §§ 438.210(c), 438.404; MHSUDS IN 18-010E

²⁷ Welf. & Inst. Code 14197.1; Health & Saf. Code, § 1367.01(h)(3)

²⁸ 42 C.F.R., § 438.402(c)(1)(ii)

- Acentra Health and treating hospital provider do not agree on a plan of care and the beneficiary, or the treating provider on behalf of the beneficiary, appeals the decision to Acentra Health.²⁹

IV. Authorizing Administrative Days

- a. A hospital may claim for administrative day services when a beneficiary no longer meets medical necessity for acute psychiatric hospital services but has not yet been accepted for placement at a non-acute residential treatment facility in a reasonable geographic area.³⁰ In order to conduct concurrent review and authorization for administrative day service claims, Acentra Health will review that the hospital has documented having made at least one contact to a non-acute residential treatment facility per day (except weekends and holidays), starting with the day the beneficiary is placed on administrative day status.
- b. Once five contacts have been made and documented, any remaining days within the seven-consecutive-day period from the day the beneficiary is placed on administrative day status can be authorized. A hospital may make more than one contact on any given day within the seven-consecutive-day period; however, the hospital will not receive authorization for the days in which a contact has not been made until and unless all five required contacts are completed and documented. Once the five-contact requirement is met, any remaining days within the seven-day period can be authorized without a contact having been made and documented.³¹
- c. Acentra Health may waive the requirements of five contacts per week if there are fewer than five appropriate, non-acute residential treatment facilities available as placement options for the beneficiary.³² The lack of appropriate, non-acute treatment facilities and the contacts made at appropriate facilities shall be documented to include the status of the placement, date of the contact, and the signature of the person making the contact.³³

Examples of appropriate placement status options include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- The beneficiary's information packet is under review;
- An interview with the beneficiary has been scheduled for [date];
- No bed available at the non-acute treatment facility;
- The beneficiary has been put on a wait list;

²⁹ 42 C.F.R., § 438.402(c)(1)(ii)

³⁰ Cal. Code Regs., tit. 9, § 1820.230(d)(2); Welf. & Inst. Code, §§ 14184.402, 14184.102 and 14184.400

³¹ Cal. Code Regs., tit. 9, § 1820.230(d)(2); Welf. & Inst. Code, §§ 14184.402, 14184.102 and 14184.400

³² Cal. Code Regs., tit. 9, § 1820.230(d)(2)(B)(1); Welf. & Inst. Code, §§ 14184.402, 14184.102 and 14184.400

³³ Cal. Code Regs., tit. 9, § 1820.230(d)(2)(B)(2); Welf. & Inst. Code, §§ 14184.402 and 14184.102 and 14184.400

- The beneficiary has been accepted and will be discharged to a facility on [date of discharge];
- The patient has been rejected from a facility due to [reason]; and/or,
- A conservator deems the facility to be inappropriate for placement.

V. Treatment Authorization Request (TAR) Processing

After discharge, a Treatment Authorization Request (TAR) shall be submitted to Acentra Health by the treating facility within 14 calendar days of the date of discharge. Acentra Health will process and submit the TAR to the DHCS Fiscal Intermediary within 14 calendar days of receipt. In instances where the TAR is not processed by the DHCS Fiscal Intermediary (for example, “Short Doyle” or “county pay” scenarios), Acentra Health will aim to process and submit the TAR to the county of responsibility within 14 calendar days of receipt.

VI. Retrospective Authorization Requirements

Retrospective Treatment Authorization Requests (TARs) may be submitted to Acentra Health for payment authorization beyond the timelines specified by regulations under the following limited circumstances, subject to verification by Acentra Health:

- Retroactive Medi-Cal eligibility determinations.
- Inaccuracies in the Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System.
- Authorization of services for beneficiaries with other health care coverage pending evidence of billing, including dual-eligible beneficiaries.
- Beneficiary’s failure to identify payer

TARs that meet retrospective criteria must be submitted by the provider to the Acentra Health within 60 calendar days of one of the following:

1. The date Medi-Cal eligibility is discovered.
2. The date a Remittance Advice (RA) showing partial payment or a Notice of Exhaustion of Benefits (EOB) is received from a third party.

Providers must bill any other insurance carrier, including Medicare, before submitting a retrospective TAR.

For retrospective reviews, providers must submit a completed TAR form along with all relevant hospital records required to determine whether to

approve, modify, or deny the request, following the same guidelines as standard concurrent reviews.

Acentra Health will communicate the authorization decision to the provider within 30 calendar days of receiving all necessary information, in accordance with state requirements. Any adverse decisions will also be communicated to the individual who received the services, or their designee, within the same timeframe.

Authorization for inpatient psychiatric services will be based on clinical evaluation of the medical necessity of care, guided by the statutory and regulatory definitions of "medical necessity" and clinical judgment applied to the documentation provided by inpatient facilities.

VII. Utilization Review

Functions related to utilization review and auditing of documentation standards are distinct from UM and authorization functions. Nothing in BHIN 22-017 prohibits the MHPs from conducting utilization review and/or auditing activities in accordance with state and federal requirements. MHPs retain the right to monitor compliance with any contractual agreements between an MHP and the MHP's network providers and may disallow claims and/or recoup funds, as appropriate, in accordance with the MHP's obligations to DHCS. For example, the MHP may disallow claims and recoup funds if it determines a service, while authorized, was not furnished to the beneficiary, or in other instances where there is evidence of fraud, waste, or abuse.

FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

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REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision	Page Number(s)
3/14/25	Insertion of link to Acentra Health Psychiatric Inpatient Concurrent Review Manual	11
3/14/25	Addition of detail regarding retrospective reviews	10
3/14/25	Minor wording adjustments/changes to order of content	Various
5/7/24	Changed "Kepro" to "Acentra Health" throughout document.	Various

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2/28/24	Minor wording adjustments/changes to order of content.	Various
2/28/24	Additional clarification added to "Retrospective Reviews" section.	9-10