MENTAL HEALTH BULLETIN

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA * DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

DATE OF ISSUE	EFFECTIVE DATE	NUMBER
March 4, 1994	Immediately	OMH-94-04

SUBJECT	BY
Serious Mental Illness: Adult Priority Group	Deputy Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

SCOPE:

County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Programs
State Mental Health Planning Council

PURPOSE:

To establish the Adult Priority Group for planning and service development for adults with serious mental illness.

BACKGROUND:

On May 20, 1993, the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) published its definition of serious mental illness in the Federal Register:

> Pursuant to Section 1912 (c) of the Public Health Services Act, as amended by Public Law 102-321, "adults with serious mental illness" are persons age 18 and over, who currently or at any time during the past year, have had a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder of sufficient duration to meet diagnostic criteria specified within DSM-III-R that has resulted in functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.
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> These disorders include any mental disorders (including those of biological etiology) listed in DSM-III-R or their ICD-9-CM equivalent (and subsequent revisions), with the exception of DSM-III-R "V" codes, substance use disorders, and developmental disorders, which are excluded unless they co-occur with other diagnosable serious mental illness. All of these disorders have episodic, recurrent, or persistent features; however, they vary in terms of severity or disabling effects.
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> Functional impairment is defined as difficulties that substantially interfere with or limit role functioning in one or more major life activities including basic daily living skills (e.g., eating, bathing, dressing); instrumental living skills (e.g., maintaining a household, managing money, getting around the community, taking prescribed medication); and functioning in social, family, and

vocational/educational contexts. Adults who would have met functional impairment criteria during the referenced year without benefit of treatment or other support services are considered to have serious mental illnesses.

This definition, required by the ADAMHA Reorganization Act of 1992, is to be used by states in planning and providing services under the CMHS Block Grant Program. States are permitted to establish priorities within the scope of this definition. Accordingly, the Office of Mental Health has identified, within the federal definition, an Adult Priority Group, which will be used for the development of the State Mental Health Plan and the county needs based plans.

DISCUSSION:

Prior to the 1992 ADAMHA Reorganization Act, federal planning legislation permitted the states to develop their own definitions of "serious mental illness." Pennsylvania's definition was developed in 1989, and included a combination of diagnostic, service utilization and level of functioning criteria. The definition was used to establish the priority group for state and county planning and service development, as well as to establish eligibility for Intensive Case Management (ICM) Services.

In accordance with the federally delegated authority to establish priorities within the broad definition published by OMHS, as well as to address a variety of limitations identified with our 1989 definition, the Office of Mental Health is redefining Pennsylvania's Adult Priority Group. This new definition does not change statutory and/or regulatory requirements services, including ICM.

Major changes to the Adult Priority Group include: a requirement that the diagnosis criterion be met in all cases; an expansion of the qualifying diagnoses to include borderline personality disorder and psychotic disorder NOS; an expansion of the treatment history criteria to include mental health services provided in correctional settings as well as those delivered by non-mental health professionals; a revision to the qualifying Global Assessment of Functioning score, reducing it from 60 (indicating moderate) to 50 (indicating severe); and the incorporation of coexisting diagnoses such as psychoactive substance use disorders as a qualifying criterion.

Persons who meet the Adult Priority group definition are to be given top priority in state and county planning and service development. Secondary priority is given to the group of persons who meet the CMHS definition but are not included in the Adult Priority Group. The secondary group has priority over persons who are statutorily eligible for publicly-funded mental health services, but do not meet the federal definition of serious mental illness.

ADULT PRIORITY GROUP:

In order to be in the Adult Priority Group, a person: must meet the federal definition of serious mental illness; must be age 18+, (or age 22+ if in Special Education); must have a diagnosis of schizophrenia, major mood disorder, psychotic disorder NOS or borderline personality disorder (DSM-III-R diagnostic codes 295.xx, 296.xx or 301.83); and must meet at least one of the following criteria: A. (Treatment History), B. (Functioning Level) or C. (Coexisting Condition or Circumstance).

A. Treatment History

1. Current residence in or discharge from a state mental hospital within the past two years; or

2. Two admissions to community or correctional inpatient psychiatric units or crisis residential services totaling 20 or more days within the past two years; or

3. Five or more face-to-face contacts with walk-in or mobile crisis or emergency services within the past two years; or

4. One or more years of continuous attendance in a community mental health or prison psychiatric service (at least one unit of service per quarter) within the past two years; or

5. History of sporadic course of treatment as evidenced by at least three missed appointments within the past six months, inability or unwillingness to maintain medication regimen or involuntary commitment to outpatient services; or

6. One or more years of treatment for mental illness provided by a primary care physician or other non-mental health agency clinician, (e.g., Area Agency on Aging) within the past two years.

B. Functioning Level

Global Assessment of Functioning Scale (DSM-III-R, pages 12 and 20) rating of 50 or below.

C. Coexisting Condition or Circumstance:

1. Coexisting diagnosis:

   a. Psychoactive Substance Use Disorder; or

   b. Mental Retardation; or

   c. HIV/AIDS; or

   d. Sensory, Developmental and/or Physical Disability; or

2. Homelessness *; or

3. Release from criminal detention. **

In addition to the above definition of the Adult Priority Group, any adult who met the standards for involuntary treatment (as defined in Chapter 5100 Regulations – Mental Health Procedures) within the 12 months preceding the assessment is automatically assigned to this high priority consumer group.

* Homeless persons are those who are sleeping in shelters or in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks or abandoned buildings.

** Applicable categories of release from criminal detention are jail diversion; expiration of sentence or parole; probation or Accelerated Rehabilitation Decision (ARD).