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**OMHSAS-19-03**

SUBJECT:

**Serious Mental Illness: Adult Priority Group**

BY:

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**SCOPE:**

County Mental Health/Intellectual Disability (MH/ID) Programs

**PURPOSE:**

To update the Adult Priority Group for planning and service development for adults with serious mental illness (SMI).

**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.

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.

Functional Impairment is defined as a difficulty that substantially interferes with or limits role functioning in one or more major life activities including basic daily living skills (e.g.

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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 SMI.”

This definition of SMI, required by the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration (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 and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) has identified, within the federal definition, an Adult Priority Group, for which comprehensive community mental health services should be available. The Adult Priority Group, as defined in this bulletin, should be considered when determining mental health service needs and in the development of the county mental health plan.

### **DISCUSSION:**

OMHSAS has redefined the Adult Priority Group to align with changes to diagnostic categories and the nonaxial assessment system in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). This new definition does not change the statutory and/or regulatory requirements for any service.

The key changes to the Adult Priority Group include: updated diagnostic criteria to align with the current DSM, changes to the treatment history requirements, elimination of the Global Assessment of Functioning Scale and revising the functioning level criteria to recommend the use of the World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS) 2.0 or any equivalent instrument that would provide a means to measure impairment in role functioning in one or more major life activities. The WHODAS is based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) for use across all of medicine and health care. Information on the WHODAS, including the instrument can be accessed at:

<https://www.who.int/classifications/icf/whodasii/en/>

Counties are not required to use any specific instrument to measure functional impairment, but should utilize instruments that can assist in determining the level of severity in various life activities and need for services.

Persons who meet the Adult Priority Group definition are to be given priority in state and county planning and service need 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 public-funded mental health services, but do not meet the federal definition of serious mental illness.

### **Adult Priority Group**

To be in the Adult Priority Group, an individual must:

- A. Meet the federal definition of SMI.

B. Be 18 years of age or older.

C. Have one of the following diagnoses:

1. Bipolar Disorder
2. Major Depressive Disorder
3. Schizophrenia
4. Schizoaffective Disorder
5. Other Specified Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorder
6. Borderline Personality Disorder

D. Meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Treatment History

- a. Current residence in or discharge from a state mental hospital within the past two years; or
- b. Two admissions to community or correctional inpatient psychiatric units or crisis residential services totaling 20 or more days within the past two years; or
- c. Five or more face-to-face contacts with walk-in or mobile crisis or emergency services within the past two years; or
- d. One or more years of continuous attendance in a community mental health or prison psychiatric outpatient service (at least one unit of service per quarter) within the past two years; or
- e. History of sporadic adherence to treatment as evidenced by at least three missed appointments within the past six months, inability or unwillingness to maintain medication regimen or
- f. One or more court orders for an involuntary outpatient commitment or assisted outpatient treatment within the past two years.

2. Functioning Level

- a. World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS) 2.0 with an overall score in the severe difficulty range; or
- b. The use of an equivalent assessment of functioning instrument to determine severity.

3. Co-Occurring Disorder or Condition
  - a. Concurrent Substance Use Disorder; or
  - b. Intellectual or Developmental Disability; or
  - c. HIV/AIDS; or
  - d. Physical disability; or
  - e. Homelessness<sup>1</sup>; or
  - f. Release from criminal detention<sup>2</sup>

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 group.

**OBSOLETE BULLETINS:**

This bulletin obsoletes the following OMH bulletin:

OMH-94-04 Serious Mental Illness: Adult Priority Group.

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<sup>1</sup> An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, such as those living in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or place not meant for habitation. (*SAMHSA Definitions of Homelessness used by SOAR and SSA.*)

<sup>2</sup> Applicable categories of released from criminal detention are: jail diversion, final date of maximum expiration (FDME), probation/parole.