

**Office of Mental Health  
And Substance Abuse Services**

Bureau of Operations  
And Quality Management

**HealthChoices Behavioral Health**

**Policy Clarification**

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*Issue Clarification #:03-03*  
*Date of Receipt:6-30-03*

*Applicability: All Zones*  
*Source Documentation:*

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**Question/Issue:**

***Submitted by:***                      *Bob Derr, OMR*  
***County Authority:***                *All Counties*  
***Topic Area:***                         *Psychological Testing*

Does HealthChoices pay for psychological testing (IQ and adaptive functioning tests) to be used to diagnose mental retardation?

**Background/Context Provided within the Request :**

Counties have noted that sometimes the IQ and adaptive functioning tests are paid by HealthChoices, and sometimes they are not. It seems to vary from county to county. The Lehigh/Capital BH RFP, IV-4. A. In-Plan Services states, "The program includes medically necessary mental health, substance abuse and behavioral services. 1) The BH-MCO will provide timely access to diagnostic, assessment, referral and treatment services for members for the following benefits: f. Psychiatric outpatient clinic, licensed psychologist and psychiatric services." Consequently, many counties are interpreting this to mean that the IQ and adaptive functioning tests are paid services.

Some counties have a backlog of requests for IQ and adaptive functioning tests used to determine a diagnosis of mental retardation and consequent eligibility for services through the County MH-MR Program. We encourage OMHSAS to consider issuing a policy clarification that states "HealthChoices will pay for psychological evaluations and assessments, such as IQ testing and adaptive functioning tests, to help determine a diagnosis of mental retardation in children and adults."

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OMHSAS

Answer/Response:

Psychological evaluations for the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders, including mental retardation, are MA compensable for MA-eligible children or adults and are therefore covered under HealthChoices. For children, the evaluation may be conducted in either the psychologist's office or an Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic or Partial Hospital setting. For adults, the evaluation may only be conducted in an Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic or Partial Hospital setting

Citation: 55 Pa.Code Chapter 1153 Outpatient Psychiatric Services, Section 1153.11 relating to types of services covered sets forth: "Medical Assistance (MA) Program coverage for outpatient psychiatric clinics and partial hospitalization facilities is limited to professional medical and psychiatric services for the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders, including mental retardation, as specified in the MA Program Fee Schedule." Further Section 1153.52(a)(5) sets forth the following payment condition: "Diagnostic psychological and intellectual evaluations shall be administered and interpreted only by a licensed psychologist or by a psychologist in preparation for licensure under the direct supervision of a licensed psychologist."

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*Director, Bureau of Operations  
and Quality Management*

*# 03-03  
Date: 8-20-03*



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OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH &  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

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To: Deputy Secretary Erney  
Deputy Secretary's Representatives  
OMHSAS Field Offices  
Department of Health and Welfare, Agency Representatives  
County Representatives  
Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations

From: Bureau of Operations and Quality Management  
Bureau of Policy and Program Development

Enclosed is HealthChoices Behavioral Health Policy Clarification developed by the Department of Public Welfare, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. If you have any questions relating to these documents please contact your OMHSAS Representative, or contact Jim Myers at (717) 772-7928.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Linda Zelch".

Linda Zelch, Acting Director  
Bureau of Operations and Quality  
Management

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jerry Kopelman".

Jerry Kopelman, Director  
Bureau of Policy and Program Development