DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
POLICY/PROCEDURE

SUBJECT **SCHEDULING INITIAL CLINICAL APPOINTMENTS AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION**	POLICY NO. **202.43**	EFFECTIVE DATE **09/01/2014**	PAGE **1 of 5**
APPROVED BY: Director	SUPERSEDES **202.43**	ORIGINAL ISSUE DATE **08/15/2013**	DISTRIBUTION LEVEL(S) **2**

PURPOSE

1.1 To establish a policy and procedure regarding the scheduling of initial clinical appointments and associated documentation, applicable to all Los Angeles County-Department of Mental Health (LAC-DMH) facilities, programs, and workforce members.

1.2 To inform Legal Entities of the policies in Sections 3.1 through 3.4 below, with the expectation these policies will be adopted and that Legal Entities will establish formal/written procedures similar to those contained in this document such that they are consistent with Purpose 1.1 above.

DEFINITIONS

2.1 **Initial Clinical Appointment:** A period of time scheduled with a clinician for the purpose of initiating an assessment and providing necessary immediate interventions, e.g., by prescribers as stated in 3.2 below.

2.2 **Newly Active Client:** A new client requiring the opening of a new clinical record or an existing client inactive for one hundred eighty (180) days or more requiring the resumption of documentation in an existing clinical record.

POLICY

3.1 All client clinical appointments shall be made in a consistent and timely manner according to Procedures 4.1 through 4.5 established below.

3.2 Any client with a foreseeable need for medication services, as determined by standard screening, who keeps a scheduled initial appointment shall be seen by a clinician who can provide the necessary medication services during the intake visit.

3.3 All clinics shall have an identified telephone number for initial appointment requests.

3.4 Walk-in instructions or arrangements shall not be a substitute for initial appointments.

PROCEDURE

4.1 All requests for initial appointments for newly-active clients shall be clearly documented by specifically assigned staff. The designated staff shall use a specific program register to enter the following information:

4.1.1 The name of the caller and the caller's relation to the client in need of the appointment, e.g., self, ACCESS staff, service provider, family member;

4.1.2 The name and position of the program staff who recorded the request;

4.1.3 The date and time of the request;

4.1.4 The contact number of the caller making the request;

4.1.4.1 Staff shall verify the number with the caller.

4.1.5 The name and preferred language of the individual for whom the appointment is being requested;

4.1.6 Whether the appointment is following discharge from an acute inpatient facility, jail, or Juvenile Justice Program; and

4.1.7 Whether or not an appointment was given.

4.1.7.1 If an appointment was given, the date, time, and staff (or supervising staff) to whom the appointment is assigned; or

4.1.7.2 If an appointment was not given, the reason why.

- Denied appointment requests must be approved by the program supervisor and a Notice of Action-E (NOA-E) (Attachment 1) is required to be issued to the Medi-Cal beneficiaries if the appointment date is beyond the requirements as stated in the policy. (Section 4.3 below)
- For the purposes of this policy, the number of days to be entered on the NOA-E line, "business days" shall be equal to the required "business days" referenced in this policy. For example, for the requirement that an initial appointment requirement shall be made within fifteen (15) business days, the corresponding entry of fifteen (15) should be entered as the number of business days on line 2 of the NOA-E.

4.2 Requirements for the Assignment of Initial Appointment Dates and Times

4.2.1 Initial appointments requested by a Medi-Cal managed care plan or provider for individuals meeting criteria for an urgent specialty mental health assessment shall be given with the appropriate level of staff within five (5) business days of the referral.

4.2.1.1 All urgent referrals from Medi-Cal managed care plans or provider shall be scheduled through the ACCESS Appointment Line.

4.2.2 For individuals who are being discharged from acute inpatient facilities, jails, or juvenile justice facilities, initial appointments shall be given as close as possible to the date of the discharge. In no instance shall the appointment be given more than five (5) business days after discharge if the request was made by either the discharge date, or be given within five (5) business days from the date of the request for services if that request was made within fifteen (15) days after the discharge date unless an NOA-E is issued.

4.2.3 For individuals not being discharged from acute inpatient facilities, jails, or juvenile justice facilities, initial appointment times and dates shall be

given as close as possible to the date of the original contact for an appointment. A request for an initial appointment may be prioritized based upon described departmental or program criteria. In no instance shall the appointment be more than fifteen (15) business days from the date of the request for services unless and NOA-E is issued.

4.3 Requirements for Issuing NOA-Es

4.3.1 The Program Head/designee shall issue an NOA-E to the beneficiary, copied to LAC-DMH Patients' Rights Office regarding appointment requests from Medi-Cal beneficiaries if: (Authority 1)

4.3.1.1 An initial appointment cannot be made within maximum number of days of the request for services, as specified above;

4.3.1.2 The scheduled initial appointment does not result in the provision of services due to unavoidable circumstances at the clinic and the offered rescheduled appointment is more than five (5) business days from the date of the original appointment;

4.3.1.3 The scheduled initial appointment is cancelled beforehand by the Medi-Cal beneficiary and the offered rescheduled appointment is more than fifteen (15) business days from the date of the original appointment; or

4.2.1.4 The scheduled initial appointment is not kept by the Medi-Cal beneficiary and the offered re-scheduled appointment is more than fifteen (15) business days from the date of the rescheduling request.

4.4 Determining Initial Appointment Times within the Permissible Limit of Days

4.4.1 Initial appointment times within the permissible limit of days may be based upon:

- Client preference;
- Acuity of need, or defined departmental or program criteria; and/or
- The availability of the necessary service provider.

4.4.2 Initial appointment times shall be based upon the requesting individual's preferences whenever possible.

4.5 Quality Review of Initial Appointment Scheduling:

Each program shall implement quality review procedures, including corrective actions, to ensure that initial clinical appointment requests are scheduled within the timeframes established above.

AUTHORITY

1. CCR Title 9 § 1850.210(4)(e)

ATTACHMENT

1. Notice of Action-E (NOA-E)

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

LAC-DMH Office of the Medical Director