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# Quality Assurance Bulletin

## Quality Assurance Unit

County of Los Angeles – Department of Mental Health

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## UPDATES TO ACCESS TO CARE RELATED POLICIES

This Bulletin is to notify all providers that Department of Mental Health (DMH) Policy and Procedures [302.07 - Access to Care](#) and [302.14 - Responding to Initial Requests for Service](#) have been updated and are now available on the DMH Internet. These policies reflect State Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) requirements for timely access to care as reflected in Information Notices [21-023](#) and [20-012](#).

As a reminder, all providers must ensure they provide or arrange for timely access to needed Specialty Mental Health Services (e.g., Mental Health Services – Assessment or Psychotherapy, Medication Support Services, Intensive Care Coordination, Intensive Home Based Services) upon request by the client or a provider acting on behalf of the client. Timely access refers to the timeframes identified in DMH Policy 302.07 and in accord with professionally recognized standards of practice.

The Access to Care Timeframes chart is attached to this Bulletin for easy reference. In addition, a short recorded training on the access to care timeframes and requirements can be found on the DMH QA Training webpage (<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/qa/qa-training/>).

If directly-operated or contracted providers have any questions related to this Bulletin, please contact the QA Unit at [NetworkAdequacy@dmh.lacounty.gov](mailto:NetworkAdequacy@dmh.lacounty.gov).

cc: DMH Executive Management  
DMH Administration Managers  
DMH QA Liaisons  
Legal Entity Executive Management

DMH Clinical Operations Managers  
DMH Quality Management Division  
DMH CIOB Managers  
Legal Entity QA contacts

# Access to Care Timeframes – DMH Policy 302.07

## Wait Times from Date of Request to First Offered Appointment

Emergency	Wait Time	Authority
<b>Crisis Evaluation</b> <i>Services for a condition or situation in which a client presents a current danger to self or others or is immediately unable to provide for or utilize food, clothing, or shelter</i>	ASAP, Same Day	CCR Title 9, Chapter 11 CA WIC 5150/5585
Urgent	Wait Time	Authority
<b>Urgent Services</b> <i>Services for a condition or situation that, if not addressed, would be highly likely to result in an immediate emergency condition</i>	48 hours (no pre-authorization) 96 hours (pre-authorization)	CFR Title 42, 438 CCR Title 28, 1300.67.2.2 DHCS IN 20-012
Expedited	Wait Time	Authority
<b>Expedited Services</b> <i>Based on triage, services that require a more timely response than a regularly scheduled appointment consistent with good professional practice (e.g. has run out/will run out of medication prior to routine appointment, significant distress) (Title 28)</i>	Prior to 10/15 business days as indicated	CCR Title 28, 1300.67.2.2
Other Types of Appointments	Wait Time	Authority
<b>ACCESS - Priority</b> <i>Only the ACCESS Appointment Line priority designation</i>	5 business days	-----
<b>DC - Priority</b> <i>Discharged from acute inpatient facility, jail or juvenile justice facility</i>	5 business days from date of discharge	NCQA/HEDIS Measure
Routine Appointments	Wait Time	Authority
<b>Routine Non-Psychiatry Specialty Mental Health Service</b> (e.g. MHS, TCM, MSS, ICC, IHBS, TBS)	10 business days	DHCS Info Notice 20-012 CCR Title 28, 1300.67.2.2
<b>Routine Psychiatrist Services</b>	15 business days	DHCS Info Notice 20-012 CCR Title 28, 1300.67.2.2
Rescheduled Appointments	Wait Time	Authority
<b>Canceled/Missed</b>	Within above timeframes from date of appointment/request for new appointment	-----

The appointment times for routine services may be extended beyond the ten (10) or fifteen (15) business day standard under the following circumstances:

- If no Client Treatment Plan (CTP): Determination by an Authorized Mental Health Discipline (AMHD) acting within the scope of his/her practice and consistent with professionally recognized standards of practice that a longer waiting time will not have a detrimental impact on the health of the client.
- If Client Treatment Plan (CTP): In accord with frequency on the CTP or, if client requests more frequent services than are listed on the CTP, and the services listed on the CTP are beyond the 10 or 15 business day standards, then determination by an Authorized Mental Health Discipline (AMHD) acting within scope of his/her practice and consistent with professionally recognized standards of practice that a longer waiting time will not have a detrimental impact on the health of the client.

Every effort shall be made to provide potential clients who screen for medication needs an initial medication appointment on the same day as the initial clinical appointment.