




**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH  
POLICY/PROCEDURE**

SUBJECT <b>TRIAGE</b>	POLICY NO. <b>302.04</b>	EFFECTIVE DATE <b>10/15/2010</b>	PAGE <b>1 of 3</b>
APPROVED BY:  Director	SUPERSEDES <b>202.40</b> <b>10/15/2010</b>	ORIGINAL ISSUE DATE <b>10/15/2010</b>	DISTRIBUTION LEVEL(S) <b>1, 2</b>

**PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To establish uniform triage policy and practices in the Los Angeles County - Department of Mental Health (LAC-DMH) directly-operated programs.
- 1.2 To inform Legal Entities of LAC-DMH triage-related policy and procedures.
- 1.3 To inform Legal Entities that they must comply with the LAC-DMH Triage definition, establish policy statements as indicated in this Policy, and formulate associated procedures.

**DEFINITION**

- 2.1 **DMH Mental Health Triage:** The process by which information is gathered and recorded either face-to-face or by phone to determine service needs, and scheduling priority for individuals seeking services, and not assessed on the same day he/she presents for services.

**POLICY**

- 3.1 A Mental Health Triage must produce the information necessary to support resulting decisions regarding service needs and priority.
  - 3.1.1 Absent other Department approved program-specific Triage procedures, the MH 679-Adult Mental Health Triage or MH 680-Child Mental Health Triage (See Attachments below) must be completed for all individuals who present to DMH programs seeking services and not provided with a Mental Health Assessment during the visit.
    - 3.1.1.1 Individuals simply seeking and/or accepting an appointment for a future date do not need to be triaged.
  - 3.1.2 For Legal Entities, LAC-DMH forms MH 679-Adult Mental Health Triage and MH 680-Child Mental Health Triage are DMH Optional Clinical Record Forms. This means the specific data elements on the form are not required; however, documentation that meets the standards of 3.1 is required.



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- 3.2 All Mental Health Triage documentation must be retained and retrievable.
  - 3.2.1 Directly-operated programs must comply with the detailed retention per DMH Policy No.401.01, Legal Responsibility for Uniform Clinical Records and Policy No. 300.06, Non-Open PHI File.
  - 3.2.2 Legal Entities must comply with State code and their Legal Entity policies and procedures on retrieval and retention.
- 3.3 In LAC-DMH directly-operated programs, Mental Health Triage may be initiated by any appropriately assigned LAC-DMH staff. In all programs, whether directly-operated or contract, Triage must be completed by an Authorized Mental Health Discipline (AMHD) whenever any significant risk/safety concerns are identified.
- 3.4 Information obtained through the Triage process is considered Protected Health Information (PHI) and is covered under Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and State confidentiality law (See References 1 and 2).

## **PROCEDURES FOR DMH ONLY**

- 4.1 When it is determined that an assessment will be completed during the same visit as the Triage, the Mental Health Triage may be concluded, and the resultant documentation, including the Triage Disposition, included in the clinical record.
- 4.2 When a Mental Health Triage is completed and an assessment is not conducted on the same day that results in the opening of an episode, a Non-Open PHI File shall be created and maintained in accordance with the following:
  - 4.2.1 DMH Policy No. 300.06, Non-Open Protected Health Information Files.
- 4.3 Non-Open Triage PHI files shall include all documentation created during the Triage encounter with the individual. Specific documentation includes:
  - 4.3.1 The Client Face Sheet (shaded areas only)
  - 4.3.2 Contact Information form (if used)
  - 4.3.3 Mental Health Triage form (if Triage was conducted)



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- 4.3.4 The Acknowledgement of Receipt regarding Notice of Privacy Practices (if used)
- 4.3.5 All other information, including Progress Notes or copies of Community Outreach Services (COS) forms, related to the individual

### **ATTACHMENTS (HYPERLINKED)**

- 1. [Adult Mental Health Triage MH679](#)
- 2. [Child Mental Health Triage MH680](#)

### **REFERENCES**

- 1. Applicable Federal Code as of September 2010: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) – Administrative Simplification (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Parts 160 and 164)
- 2. Applicable State Code as of September 2010: California Welfare and Institutions Code – Section 5328

### **RESPONSIBLE PARTY**

LAC-DMH Program Support Bureau, Quality Assurance Division