

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH



Policy Title: Responding to Initial Requests for Service

Policy Number: 302.14

Policy Category: Clinical

Distribution Level: Directly-Operated Programs and Contracted Agencies

Responsible Party: Quality Assurance

I. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy establishes requirements for all Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH/Department) facilities, providers, and workforce members for responding to initial requests for mental health services and universal screening.

Contracted agencies shall develop an internal policy and associated procedures that are consistent with their organizational practices and meet the requirements set forth in this policy.

II. DEFINITIONS

Initial Clinical Appointment: A period of time scheduled with a clinician for the purpose of initiating an assessment and providing necessary interventions as identified in [DMH Policy 302.07](#).

Initial Medication Appointment: A period of time scheduled with a psychiatrist or psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner for the purpose of initiating an evaluation for medications and providing necessary medication services as identified in DMH Policy 302.07.

Initial Request for Mental Health Services (Initial Request): Any request for mental health services, whether made by the potential client or someone on behalf of the potential client, which will require a new assessment to be completed. This includes prospective clients who have not had clinical records and inactive clients returning for services after termination/inactivity, per [DMH Policy 312.01](#).

- A request for an appointment is considered to be an initial request for mental health services.

DMH Mental Health Triage (Triage): A documented evaluation of a potential client presenting for services for whom a standard assessment will not be conducted on the same day the individual presents. This documented evaluation is designed to determine immediate, expedited, or routine service needs and scheduling priority. The standard assessment may be done at a later date. ([DMH Policy 302.04](#))

Potential Client: An individual who is seeking, or for whom someone else is seeking, services.

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Service Request Log (SRL): Also known as MH 709, it is a log for documenting information about initial requests for services through Universal Screening.

Service Request Tracking System (SRTS): An application system that allows for tracking of initial requests transferred across providers.

Universal Screening: The standard set of questions to evaluate all initial requests for service in order to determine if an individual should receive an initial appointment for services and, if so, the timeframe for providing services. All points of entry into DMH System of Care are required to ask a consistent set of questions for all new requests for service. Areas of inquiry in Universal Screening include the request (e.g., date, time), referring party (e.g., name, relationship to potential client), potential client (e.g. demographics, release from facilities, emergent medication needs, previous/current mental health services, cultural considerations), and disposition (e.g., where referred, appointment date). This process may result in referring for Triage.

III. POLICY

All providers shall have an identified process for receiving and responding to initial requests for service in as timely a manner as possible that includes an identified telephone number or Department-approved process for receiving such requests and is in accordance with Section 4.1.

- Requests may be made via telephone, walk-in, ([DMH Policy 302.12](#)), or in writing (electronic or hard copy).
 1. Staff shall not direct individuals who request services to walk-in for those services, but rather shall offer an initial clinical appointment as outlined in the Procedure Section.
 2. Staff shall not consider the completion of triage without an initial clinical appointment as the final disposition of an initial request.

All initial requests shall be screened using the Universal Screening questions and recorded in the SRL or other Department-approved process in accordance with Procedures Section B and 9 CCR §1810.405(f).

- Contracted providers must electronically submit all SRL data to the Department.

All outpatient providers with a spectrum of services (e.g., Prevention and Early Intervention, and Recovery, Resilience, and Reintegration, as opposed to solely Full Service Partnership) shall reserve initial clinical appointment times for the DMH ACCESS

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Appointment Line to utilize and ensure the reserved appointment information is kept up to date.

Every effort shall be made to provide potential clients who screen for medication needs (will run out of medications prior to next routine appointment, have run out of medications, and/or clinically present in distress for which medications may assist) an initial medication appointment on the same day as the initial clinical appointment.

All first offered initial clinical and medication appointments shall be within the timeframes identified in [DMH Policy 302.07](#).

The disposition of an initial request shall be recorded in the SRL or other Department-approved system within five (5) business days from the initial date of contacting or attempting to contact the potential client/representative.

IV. PROCEDURES

[Click here to view procedures.](#)

V. AUTHORITY

[California Code of Regulations Chapter 11 Title 9 Section 1810.405\(f\)](#)

VI. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was effective July 15, 2019.

VII. SIGNATURE, TITLE, and DATE OF APPROVAL



Name/Title



Date