

Effective Date: 7/1/2019

Review Date: 6/25/2019

Revised Date:

North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization, LLC

Section 1500 – Clinical: Access to Outpatient Behavioral Health Services

Authorizing Source: HCA Contract

Approved by: Executive Director

Date:

Signature:

POLICY # 1503.00

SUBJECT: ACCESS TO OUTPATIENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

PURPOSE

To provide individuals with timely access to clinically appropriate behavioral health services.

Note: This policy pertains only to access to outpatient behavioral health services. For details regarding access to crisis services, see Policy #1704, Crisis Services – general policy. For details regarding inpatient mental health treatment, see Policy #1571, Inpatient certification and authorization. For access to other specific programs, please consult the policy pertaining to that program.

POLICY

Individuals may access services by directly contacting the Behavioral Health Agency (BHA) of their choice. Individuals calling to request services will be assisted in a manner that is friendly, flexible, proactive and responsive.

The North Sound BH-ASO or its contracted BHAs shall not discriminate against individuals who have challenges in receiving services (including, but not limited to, individuals who have a history of dangerous behavior, or who do not have housing) and will serve qualifying individuals in alternate programs when the preferred or most appropriate placement is not available.

Should a BHA decide to enact a policy to refuse services based on moral or religious grounds, the BHA must notify North Sound BH-ASO at least 30 days prior to enacting such a policy.

Geographical accessibility:

The North Sound BH-ASO will contract with provider agencies to maintain a network across the BH-ASO service area to ensure when individuals must travel to service sites, there is a location meeting the following standards:

1. In rural areas, service sites will be located within a 30-minute commute time from the individual's home. (Rural areas are those with a population density of at least 20 and less than 500 people per square mile.)
2. In large rural geographic areas (e.g. ferry transportation issues), service sites are accessible within a 90-minute commute time. (Large rural areas are those with a population density of less than 20 people per square mile.)
3. In urban areas, service sites are accessible by public transportation. (Urban areas are those with a population density of at least 500 people per square mile.)
4. In the following situations travel standards do not apply: a) when the individual opts to use service sites that require travel beyond the standards; b) under exceptional circumstances (e.g. inclement

weather, hazardous road conditions due to accidents or road construction, public transportation shortages, delayed ferry service).

PROCEDURE

Individuals seeking to initiate outpatient or residential behavioral health services can make this request by directly calling a BHA during business hours. (Crisis behavioral health services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by calling the VOA Care Crisis Line at 1-800-584-3578.)

BHAs may at their discretion require that someone requesting services on behalf of another individual have the legal authority to consent for treatment. However, for the purposes of care coordination, the following professionals may initiate the request for an assessment for an individual:

1. Facility (inpatient psychiatric, substance use residential, jail, prison, etc.) discharge or release planners;
2. Apple Health Managed Care Organization (MCO) Care Managers;
3. Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) referral and/or referral from Primary Care Provider (PCP).

While the assessment appointment may be requested and scheduled by one (1) of these professionals, the individual for whom care is being sought or their legal representative, must still provide consent to assessment and treatment prior to delivery of services including assessment.

Individuals who are already enrolled in outpatient behavioral health services with a North Sound BH-ASO contracted provider and want additional services or to transfer to another BHA can access additional services in the following way:

1. If they are currently enrolled in substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and are seeking mental health treatment, they may call the BHA of their choosing to request services.
2. If they are currently enrolled in mental health treatment and are seeking SUD treatment, they may call the BHA of their choosing to request services.
3. If they are enrolled in treatment and would like to transfer providers or add an additional service for the same type of diagnosis (e.g., someone enrolled in SUD treatment wishes to receive an additional SUD service), they should discuss this with their current Behavioral Health Care Provider; coordination of network services or transfers within the network shall follow North Sound BHO Policy #1510, Intra-Network Transfers and Coordination of Care.

Requests for service through VOA and BHAs with scheduled assessment appointments:

Individuals/families seeking behavioral health services with a North Sound BH-ASO contracted BHA shall be assisted by staff that is adept at triage and screening functions and responsive to the requester's identified needs. When an individual contacts a BHA that uses scheduled assessment appointments to request an intake assessment:

1. The first level of screening will be for safety concerns. If a crisis response is needed, the caller will be immediately connected to VOA Care Crisis Line (1-800-584-3578) where behavioral health clinicians are available for phone consultation. Face-to-face outreach is available if indicated.
2. The next level of screening will be for financial eligibility. Those individuals who have Washington Apple Health that covers behavioral health services, per ProviderOne, may not be denied an initial assessment and shall be scheduled by the provider agency for an initial assessment. Individuals who meet other funding priorities for assessment as identified in North Sound BHO Policy #1574 State and Substance Abuse Block Grant Funding Plan are also offered an initial assessment appointment.

- a. Individuals whose eligibility is not yet reflected in ProviderOne but who have written documentation from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) that verifies the appropriate eligibility, are considered eligible for assessment. Prior to providing the first ongoing appointment, eligibility is expected to be reflected in ProviderOne or the individual may not be eligible for ongoing services.
 - b. Individuals/families that are identified during this initial screening as needing assistance to obtain Washington Apple Health will be referred to DSHS as appropriate.
3. Once the determination has been made that the individual is not in need of crisis services and is eligible for an initial assessment, the nature and purpose of this assessment shall be clearly explained.
- a. The purpose of the assessment appointment is to determine whether the individual meets eligibility, per Washington State Access to Care Standards (ACS), for ongoing behavioral health services.
 - b. Individuals are encouraged to bring natural supports to the initial assessment to assist with the provision of support and information and to establish the format for individual-driven support teams and continued involvement of natural supports. They are also encouraged to bring any records available to them in order to assist in the assessment process. Individuals shall be asked about any special accommodations that are needed at the assessment appointment. Accommodations shall be made for barriers of language or disability.
 - c. If an individual's explanation of their presenting problem indicates they may not meet ACS, a BHA may advise them their needs may be better met through their Washington Apple Health MCO. If the financially eligible individual prefers to request assessment through the BHA, they may not be denied that assessment.
4. Individuals shall be offered an assessment appointment within required timelines and other accessibility standards.
- a. Required timelines:
 - i. Standard assessment appointments should be offered within 10 business days of the RFS.
 - ii. Individuals requiring expedited assessment appointments should be offered an assessment within three (3) business days of the RFS.

Expedited assessments are required when following the standard timeframe could result in the individual presenting a risk of harm to themselves or others or when the individual's present behavioral health condition affects their ability to attain, maintain, or regain maximum function. Examples of when this may be the case include:

1. Individuals discharging from a hospital;
2. Individuals discharging from residential SUD treatment;
3. Individuals being released from incarceration;
4. Individuals who do not meet criteria for emergent or urgent care through the Care Crisis Line but who are unstable or at risk to the degree that it is likely they would require hospitalization if not offered an assessment within three (3) business days.

- iii. Individuals who are discharging from inpatient psychiatric care or residential SUD treatment should be offered an assessment within seven (7) calendar days.
- b. Other accessibility standards
 - i. Individuals who do not request or call directly to a specific BHA shall be informed of the BHAs available in their area and offered an initial assessment through a North Sound BH-ASO network BHA that:
 - 1. Is geographically accessible within distance and travel time standards as noted above in the Policy section. Individuals may choose to use providers that require travel beyond the travel standards.
 - 2. Provides services for their age group.
 - ii. If an individual is unable to get to an office-based assessment due to the individual's behavioral health issue(s), disability, lack of transportation, incarceration, or other barriers, assessments shall be established at other locations as needed.
 - iii. Children and parents may choose to receive services from the same provider when appropriate and available.
 - iv. Individuals age 18-20 may choose to receive services from either a child/youth or adult serving BHA.
- c. RFS for individuals discharging from a facility when the discharge or release date is not established or is beyond the designated timeline for assessments shall follow the process outlined below:

Requester contacts the BHA where the individual will be seen for an assessment to determine availability of and eligibility for the specific services being requested, to coordinate continuity of care and identify an assessment date. The BHA may treat the request as pending and record the RFS date as the discharge or release date.

Monitoring of access to services:

Access to services shall be monitored by the North Sound BH-ASO utilizing data including, but not limited to:

- 1. Volume of RFS;
- 2. RFS and RFS – Additional Information transactions
- 3. Referral Source;
- 4. Call disposition if no assessment is offered;
- 5. Timeliness of assessment appointments including:
 - a. First offered assessment appointment including reasons why an appointment was not offered within required timelines, if applicable;
 - b. First accepted assessment appointment;
 - c. First Offered/Referral transaction;
 - d. Assessment appointment information.

ATTACHMENTS

None

