



PROVIDER ALERT

Alert # 6- 032509 – HCAL, HCBK, HCCH, HCCMP, HCNC, HCNE, HCYA

Notification to BHRS Providers Regarding Community Care’s Position on STAP and Group Treatment Programs vs. TSS Workers Meeting in Groups with Consumers

STAP and Group Treatment Programs

In accordance with the STAP Presentations conducted by OMHSAS over the past year, Community Care has contracted for Summer Therapeutic Activities Programs (STAP) in our various contracts across the State. STAP’s provide a range of age appropriate specialized therapies (defined as art, music, dance and movement, play, recreational or occupational therapies) which require appropriately qualified staff and/or therapeutic activities (defined as the more traditional structured therapeutic group activities) designed to aid in the development of interpersonal relationships, daily living, decision-making, problem-solving and coping skills. These services are generally provided in an outdoor environment for the purpose of furthering individualized therapeutic goals as described in the individualized treatment plan. Summer therapeutic activities programs are expected to be integrated into the overall mental health treatment of the child. The program should include both specialized therapies as well as indoor/outdoor activities.

The Provider Qualifications Necessary to Run a STAP include:

- a *base mental health license* which includes at least one of the following; outpatient, partial, or family based
- a service description approved by OMHSAS.

Please note that an individual licensed clinician (such as a psychologist) cannot enroll to run STAP

The **main objectives for a STAP** is to provide specialized mental health interventions for youth in need of:

- structured activities in a therapeutic social setting
- building new skills and/or enhancing positive practice of previously learned skills with an overall goal of generalization of skills to the home, school and community

However, it should be noted that **STAP is NOT**:

- An appropriate service for children who could function in a community program during the summer months and make progress with less restrictive or less intensive services
- A convenience for parents (i.e., the child must need these services, rather than the parents needing only child care)
- Recreation without treatment

In addition to STAP’s which are offered over the summer months, group treatment programs that focus on a variety of different issues may also be available for children and adolescents. Group

treatment programs can typically be accessed via outpatient mental health clinics, BHRS exception programs, school-based mental health programs and partial hospital programs. For more information on child and adolescent group treatment programs in your area please contact your Community Care Care Manager.

TSS Workers Meeting in Groups with Consumers

It has come to our attention that some providers have gathered small groups of children and their 1:1 TSS workers together in the community in a pseudo-group treatment model. After learning about and discussing this practice with OMHSAS, Community Care is informing providers of our position on this practice.

There are no situations in which it would be appropriate for a group of TSS to meet in the community with a group of children. This practice is unacceptable for several reasons:

- As per the DPW Bulletins, TSS is designed as a 1:1 treatment service.
- If a youth needs treatment in the context of a group, he/she should be in a group treatment program that is designed not only to meet the individual needs of the youth, but also considers the functioning of the group as a whole, ensures youth are grouped together in a manner that is clinically appropriate, and provides planned group activities that are designed to meet individual needs.
- Youth who do not need the level of care provided by a group treatment program should be served in a manner that promotes integration into the community. Unless the youth are in a structured group treatment program, grouping youth with significant emotional and behavioral issues together is not only likely to have a negative effect but is also inconsistent with CASSP principles.
- Grouping youth together in this manner raises serious concerns about maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of the youth served.
- TSS must be delivered in a manner consistent with the treatment plan submitted to Community Care. No treatment plans have proposed or justified the grouping of youth with their TSS. Please note that due to the above reasons, a treatment plan that proposes grouping of youth with their individual TSS is inappropriate and will not be approved.

If you have any questions specific to this provider alert, please feel free to contact your Community Care Provider Relations Representative.