

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ANN MARIE T. SULLIVAN, M.D.
Commissioner

THOMAS E. SMITH, MD
Chief Medical Officer

MEMORANDUM

To: NYS Public Mental Health Programs

From: Dr. Thomas Smith, Chief Medical Officer, NYS OMH
Robert Myers, PhD, Senior Deputy Commissioner, NYS OMH
Moira Tashjian, MPA, Associate Commissioner, NYS OMH
Donna Bradbury, MA, LMHC, Associate Commissioner, NYS OMH
Dr. Flavio Casoy, Medical Director for Special Projects, NYS OMH

Date: November 12, 2020

RE: Updates to Infection Control Manual for Public Mental Health System Programs

The Office of Mental Health has updated the Infection Control Guidance for the Public Mental Health System and converted it into a manual. This memorandum lists the updates since the previous version issued on June 25, 2020. Agencies should use the enclosed manual to update their Programs' Policies and Procedures.

- A new section was added starting on page 5 that explains to agencies when programs should take enhanced precautions.
 - Incorporated guidance from the NY Cluster Action Initiative, including new orders regarding visitation at hospitals and residential programs.
 - Incorporated updated Travel Guidance.
 - In the section for outpatient programs, starting on page 6, detailed clarification is provided on how programs should determine which clients should be seen virtually and which clients should be seen in person. Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Mobile Crisis Teams, and Forensic Linkage Teams should prioritize in-person encounters given the hard-to-engage nature of each client population.
 - In sections for outpatient and residential programs on pages 6-18, a clarification on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is provided. All staff should always wear a mask around clients and always maintain 6 feet of distance. When physical distancing is not possible or if staff is caring for an individual with known or suspected COVID-19-Like Illness (CLI), then staff should also wear additional PPE such as eye protection and gloves. It is critically important to understand that both physical distancing and a face covering is required, not one or the other.
 - Indoor, in-person groups are only permitted when programs are in standard precautions. There can be no more than ten individuals, last no more than one hour, and all participants must wear a face covering and maintain physical distancing.
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- Clarification on visitation rules for residential programs, including new rules for programs in red and orange zones.
- Organized outings from residential programs are only permitted if precautions can be taken and if the program is observing standard precautions.
- Guidance on discontinuation of isolation and return to work has not changed in this version.