

OMHSAS Updates: APAs to Continue, Licensing Process Updates

OMHSAS: Deputy Secretary Kristen Houser

Deputy Secretary Kristen Houser outlined a new stakeholder meeting process that will provide a greater level of access and response to the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services' (OMHSAS) initiatives and processes. The plan will be to offer two monthly stakeholder forums, one for providers and another one for counties and their affiliate organizations. The new structure will entail regularly planned monthly meetings that will review major initiatives and a dedicated question and answer session for stakeholders, providers, families, and consumers to submit inquiries. There is a dedicated [RA account](#) where questions can be submitted in advance.

APAs: Kelly Weyda

OMHSAS reported that the Primary Contractors/ Behavioral Health-Managed Care Organizations (BH-MCOs) will continue to offer alternative paying arrangements (APAs) through the first quarter of the calendar year to support services and providers who meet criteria. Notifications will be sent or posted on Friday, November 20, 2020; they will outline the process and specific details for providers. As always, providers are encouraged to discuss unmet needs with their BH-MCOs.

OMHSAS Children's Bureau Update: Scott Talley

Trauma-Informed Initiative

OMHSAS continues its work on the trauma front, and part of this is going to be integrated into the work of the statewide Heal PA Trauma Initiative led by Dan Jurman of the Office of Advocacy and Reform. This group was created as part of a trauma think tank recommendation to support Governor Wolf's goal to make Pennsylvania a trauma-informed state. The Heal PA Initiative consists of stakeholders across the field who are engaged in the process of addressing these issues through a trauma-informed plan. One area of crossover with the OMHSAS children's plan is the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) assessment and process.

OMHSAS is also continuing to work with providers on their own organizational trauma-informed competency with the goal that agencies will be trauma aware by June 2021 and trauma-informed the following year. These time frames are contingent.

As part of this initiative, OMHSAS will be releasing an organizational trauma-informed survey that will provide an overview of an organization's readiness to eventually be trauma-informed. The survey is expected to go out after the first of the year.

OMHSAS Telehealth: Jamey Welty

The last Telehealth Steering Committee Meeting was held today with recommendations to be announced as soon as possible. There will be additional workgroup sessions for:

- The development of a Telehealth Assessment Tool;
- How out-of-state providers will be enrolled/handled;
- How to set rates;
- Implementation of quality measures; and
- Creating a “Culture of Inclusion.”

It was announced that early in 2021, there will be another survey administered to practitioners and clients to build upon the telehealth survey given in 2020.

The plan at this time will be to draft the bulletin in the coming months with the assistance of small groups around the target areas listed above.

A good deal of work remains on the legislative front as the question of the ongoing use of audio/telephonic “only” remains at the forefront on the federal level with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of Civil Rights & Compliance (OCC).

A Crisis Service Regulations Update: Jamey Welty

There is an active steering committee that is reviewing the elements of new crisis regulations. The committee will regroup in 2021 to begin the process of drafting recommendations as part of the regulation development. It is expected to take up to two years for the full process to effectuate, including a public comment period prior to the regulations going to the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) for promulgation.

Licensing Updates: Jason Demanincor

The Department of Human Services (DHS) Program Office is required to have a protocol for the carrying out of live facility inspections under the issue of COVID-19. The determination will be based upon the Department of Health’s (DOH) “percent of positivity” for the given county. These details and specifics can be found on the DOH website.

- Below 5 percent is a “low” positivity rate
- Between 5 percent and 10 percent is a medium positivity rate
- Above 10 percent is a high positivity rate

There will be in-person inspections in those counties where that number is five percent or below. There will be a hybrid inspection of policies in medium counties. There will be remote only inspections of records and remote live video feed by staff and as directed by OMHSAS staff in high counties. There will be in-person visits to follow up on complaints.

COVID-19 Reporting Process

All OMHSAS licensed providers are required to follow the DHS COVID-19 reporting requirements. The reporting process has been moved to an online provider portal as of August 28 of this year. This should

be the method used for all agencies that are licensed. The resource email account can be contacted [here](#).

There is a daily report published on the DHS website and can be access by typing this into the web browser “DHS Licensed Facilities COVID-19 data.”

Licensing Backlog

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the ability to license programs, but OMHSAS continues to make progress in the backlog. In May, the backlog was 400; in September, it was 150. There will be another report in early December to update the backlog through November 2020.

Budget

Deputy Houser reported that there is little news on the budget and that the legislature is back in session this week. The needs for services remain high, and the question regarding funding remains unanswered at this time.

Questions and Answers: Dwaneen Hicks

1. Q: When will the trauma-informed survey be released?

A: Release is expected in early January 2021.

2. Q: Can family members and advocates attend the monthly OMHSAS calls?

A: All groups-including the consumers, family members, and advocates-are invited to attend these webinars. They may apply to be included on the ListServe by emailing Josh Haubert at OMHSAS.

3. Q: Will the OMHSAS Telehealth Survey be available to the public?

A: Data on the survey is in the final stage of editing at this point.

Any questions that were not answered will be answered and posted on the OMHSAS website.