

## Memorandum

**To:** Virginia Behavioral Health Stakeholders  
**From:** Medical Assessment Workgroup  
**Date:** October 30, 2019  
**Re:** NEW Medical Assessment and Screening Guidelines for Adults and Peds

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On Monday, November 5, 2018, newly established Medical Assessment and Screening Guidelines (Guidelines) will go into effect in Virginia.

The Guidelines were developed through a Medical Assessment Workgroup made up of representatives from the Virginia College of Emergency Physicians (VACEP), the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), and the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA). In addition, feedback was sought from multiple behavioral health stakeholders throughout Virginia.

The Guidelines are the result of consensus built to develop minimum standards when evaluating a patient who presents in the emergency department (ED) with psychiatric symptoms. The new Guidelines will:

- Assist with efficiently identifying potential medical etiology and medical comorbidities requiring treatment.
- Encourage and reinforce doctor-to-doctor communication and collaboration through the establishment of procedures for amicably resolving concerns around psychiatric admissions.
- Outline the admission limitations of state psychiatric hospitals and crisis stabilization units (CSUs) through a list of exclusionary criteria.
- Establish the Protocol Review and Monitoring Committee (PRMC) to monitor implementation and recommend revisions to the Guidelines as needed.

When implemented, the Guidelines will improve the process for evaluating the medical and/or psychiatric needs of individuals presenting in the ED, as well as facilitating disposition. To that end, it is important to understand Virginia's current medical assessment protocols, as well as monitor and assess the effectiveness of the Guidelines during implementation. **Please take a moment to complete the attached baseline survey to assist with that effort; a 90-day and 6-month survey will be distributed in the future.**

On November 5, 2018, the Guidelines will be distributed via associations or organizations affiliated with the affected stakeholders. In addition, the Guidelines will be available on DBHDS' website. Additional correspondence related to implementation and training will be available through your association or organization.

**Medical Assessment Workgroup Members:**

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