

Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Bureau of Policy, Planning and Program Development

Policy Clarification

<i>Clarification #</i>	05-22-01	<i>Applicability:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>HealthChoices Primary Contractors, Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations.</i>• <i>Psychiatric Outpatient Clinic Providers.</i>
<i>Date of Receipt:</i>	February 02, 2022	<i>Source Documentation:</i>	55 Pa. Code § 1153.52, § 1153.52 55 Pa. Code § 5200.22

Submitted by: Community Care Behavioral Health
County Authority: All Primary Contractors
Topic Area: Interns and billing for services

Question/Issue:

We are seeking clarification on the ability of providers to bill for services provided by students in accredited internship programs. Specifically, if the student intern meets the requirements of a lesser credentialed position, will the services rendered by that student intern be recognized under payment conditions? For example, certain graduate student interns in an outpatient mental health clinic would meet the definition of a mental health worker and a mental health worker may bill for services rendered. We note two regulatory citations, specifically for outpatient mental health clinics, that seem to offer contradictory positions on the ability of these interns to bill for their services.

Given the current staffing difficulties expressed by providers of all types/specialties, clarification of this issue will be helpful in addressing service access. We request clarification on the ability of student interns to bill for services across all provider type/specialties assuming the student intern meets the definition of positions defined within regulation.

Background/Context Provided within the Request:

§ 5200.22. Staffing pattern.

(h) Graduate and undergraduate students in accredited training programs in various mental health disciplines may participate in the treatment of individuals receiving services when under the direct supervision of a mental health professional but are not to be included for the purpose of defining staffing patterns.

§ 1153.52. Payment conditions for various services.

(3) Psychotherapy—individual, family, collateral family or group—shall be provided only by a clinical staff person.

Our interpretation of 5200.22 is that the student may deliver services but may not be included in counts of required FTE positions. This implies student interns who deliver services could bill in accordance with payment rules. However, our interpretation of 1153.52 is that student interns cannot deliver services because they are not considered staff persons.

As stated above, we seek clarification on ability of student interns to bill for services across all provider type/specialties.

OMHSAS

Answer/Response:

In accordance with 55 Pa. Code § 1153.52(a)(3), in outpatient clinics, psychotherapy (individual, family, collateral family or group) shall be provided only by a clinical staff person. A student intern who meets the qualifications as a mental health worker or mental health professional as outlined in 55 Pa. Code § 1153.2 (Definitions) may qualify to provide services in a clinic. The clinic must review the student's qualifications to qualify as a mental health worker or mental health professional and document these in the student's personnel record at the clinic. The services provided by such student interns under the supervision of a mental health professional may then be billable by the clinic. However, as outlined in 55 Pa. Code § 5200.22(h), student interns are not to be included for the purpose of defining staffing patterns.



Benny Varghese
Acting Director, Bureau of Policy, Planning, & Program
Development

May 2, 2022

Date Issued