

State Institutes New Screening Tool for SMI Services and Supports

On November 1, NC DHHS and LME/MCOs began using a new screening tool for individuals being considered for admission to an Adult Care Home (ACH). The Referral Screening Verification Process (RSVP) replaces the ACH Pre-Admission Screening Resident Review (PASRR). This change is another means of refining and improving the statewide system that assists individuals with Severe Mental Illness (SMI) or Serious and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI) who are being considered for admission to an Adult Care Home or have been in a State psychiatric hospital with a SMI/SPMI and are homeless or have unstable housing or individuals with SMI/SPMI who reside in a licensed ACH. This is the target population for the USDOJ settlement with North Carolina and for the NC Transition to Community Living Initiative.

The implementation of RSVP brings some changes to the screening that has been used to qualify individuals for the TCLI target population. The changes include moving the screening auspices from NC DHHS to the LME/MCOs or their contracted entity; using the screening to verify if the individual can qualify for Medicaid or determine if the individual qualifies for state-funded community-based mental health services and supports; allowing for many more individuals and organizations to submit requests for screening of individuals being considered for admission to an ACH and who they believe will qualify for TCLI; and, merging data into RSVP from other data available related to individuals who qualify for TCLI. The last is possibly the biggest changes that may result in a much larger group of individuals with SMI being assessed to access the mental health services and supports that have been built under TCLI. “Transitioning to the RSVP system should result in an administrative burden decrease for providers and allow people to have quicker access to referrals for TCLI services,” stated Kathy Nichols, Assistant Director, NC Division of MH/IDD/SAS.

Since the USDOJ Settlement agreement was established in 2012 and the TCLI was then implemented, NC DHHS has used the ACH PASRR to screen individuals who may qualify for TCLI. PASRR has traditionally been used to ensure that an individual’s needs fit the services provided in skilled nursing facilities. North Carolina has been using it to assess individuals with SMI/SPMI that are being considered for admission to Adult Care Homes in order to determine if they meet

the Diversion population of the settlement agreement. RSVP will potentially increase the coordination between agencies to serve the TCLI population.

RSVP also will allow for several divisions of NC State government, i.e. Division of Public Safety; Division of Social Services; and, Division of Adult and Aging Services to access this data. Corye Dunn, Director of Public Policy at Disability Rights NC noted, "Any screening tool for diversion can only be effective if there are housing and services available for people to be diverted to."

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