



7.5.4 ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCESS (IRP)

Issue Date: 02/05/2018

Revision History: 10/06/2025, 07/16/2020, 12/20/2019

References: Government Code sections 11180-11182; W&I §§ 5614, 5651(c), 5717(b), 14124.2(a), Department of Health Care Services Performance Contract 18-95281 (Exhibit A, Number 6 A 2) Issue Resolution Process

Policy Owner: Behavioral Health Services Director and Behavioral Health Services Assessment and Coordination Team (ACT) Coordinator

Director Signature: **Signature on File**

I. Policy Statement

To establish a formal process for filing and resolving issues related to the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) in Sonoma County. It addresses concerns such as community planning, the use of MHSA funds, program implementation, and member access. This process is required to be completed before escalating issues to state agencies, and is separate from the grievance process related to individual services or treatment.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all Sonoma County Department of Health Services – Behavioral Health Division (DHS-BHD) Covered Persons including employees (full-time, part-time, extra-help), unpaid interns, paid interns, temporary agency workers, registered volunteers, and all individual providers contractually designated as covered persons. Covered Persons do not include Community Based Organization (CBO) staff.

III. Definitions

Community Program Planning (CPP) Processes: A required process of the MHSA that ensures meaningful community involvement in how MHSA funds are used. It is a structured process led by County mental health departments to gather

input from diverse stakeholders—including members, families, service providers, and community members—when developing or updating MHSA plans.

Mental Health Services Act (MHSA): A California law passed in 2004 that provides funding to improve and expand the public mental health system. Funded by a tax on incomes over \$1 million, MHSA focuses on prevention, early intervention, and community-based care. It emphasizes local input, equity, and recovery, and is organized into five key areas: Community Services and Supports (CSS), Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI), Innovation (INN), Workforce Education and Training (WET), and Capital Facilities and Technological Needs (CFTN).

MHSA Plan: An MHSA Plan is a comprehensive document developed by a county's behavioral health department that outlines how MHSA funds will be used to address local mental health needs. The plan is based on community input gathered through the Community Program Planning (CPP) process and must align with MHSA goals, such as prevention, early intervention, and recovery-oriented care. The MHSA Plan must be made available for public review and comment before being submitted to the State for final approval.

MHSA Plan Update: An annual plan update is a required, based on the original MHSA Plan. It provides updates on progress and outcomes of funded programs; any proposed changes to services, budgets, or priorities; and the community program process and stakeholder input.

IV. Policy

- A. The DHS-BHD has adopted the MHSA Issue Resolution Process (IRP) for filing and resolving issues related to:
 - 1. MHSA Community Program Planning (CPP) Processes (e.g., stakeholder involvement, required time frames, etc.).
 - 2. Appropriate use of MHSA funds (e.g., non-supplantation).
 - 3. Inconsistency between an approved MHSA Plan/Update and actual implementation.
 - 4. Member access to MHSA programs.
- B. To avoid duplication of policy 7.1.2, Member Grievances and Discrimination Grievances, which provides detailed guidelines for addressing grievances and appeals regarding services, treatment, and care, DHS-BHD is required to establish an MHSA IRP.
- C. State regulations require the DHS-BHD MHSA IRP be fully exhausted before the Issue Filer may access state-level resolution processes through any of the following agencies: Mental Health Oversight and Accountability Commission

(MHSOAC), the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), or the California Mental Health Planning Council (CMHPC).

D. Sonoma County DHS-BHD is committed to:

1. The right of individual(s) to bring issues forth.
2. Addressing issues regarding MHSA in an expedient and appropriate manner.
3. Providing several avenues for individuals to file an issue.
4. Ensuring assistance is available, if needed, for anyone who desires to file an issue.
5. Honoring the Issue Filer's desire for anonymity.
6. Ensuring an impartial IRP is conducted.
7. Providing written notification of the outcome to the Filer, if contact information was provided by the Filer.

V. Procedures

- A. The MHSA Coordinator will provide training on MHSA Issue Resolution Process (IRP) policy and procedures to all DHS-BHD employees and service providers involved in the delivery of services to recipients of MHSA programs. Additionally, the MHSA Coordinator will maintain documentation of training provided to all DHS-BHD employees and contract service providers including: dates of training, attendance, and curriculum.
- B. An individual may file an issue at any time within the system by filling out the MHSA Issue Resolution Form and submitting it to the MHSA Coordinator.
- C. The MHSA Coordinator shall investigate the issue and may convene an Issue Resolution Committee composed of individuals who represent diverse perspectives.
- D. The MHSA issue shall be forwarded to the DHS-BHD Division Management Team and the DHS-BHD Director for review.
- E. Upon completion of the investigation, the MHSA Coordinator shall issue a report to the DHS-BHD Senior Management Team which includes the DHS-BHD Director.
- F. The report shall include a description of the issue, a brief explanation of the investigation, the recommendation, and the DHS-BHD resolution to the issue.
- G. DHS-BHD Director will submit the report to the Department of Health Services (DHS) Director and the Compliance Officer.

H. For the MHSA IRP form (in English and Spanish) go to:
<http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Health/Behavioral-Health/Mental-Health-Services-Act/>

Email completed form to: MHSA@sonomacounty.gov or mail to:

Department of Health Services
Behavioral Health Division
Mental Health Services Act Coordinator
2227 Capricorn Way
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

Phone: (707) 565-4909

I. The MHSA Coordinator shall provide the Issue Filer a written acknowledgement of receipt of the issue or complaint within three (3) business days. The Filer will not receive a response if the Filer chooses to remain anonymous.

J. The MHSA Coordinator shall notify the Filer of the issue resolution in writing and inform Filer they will receive a letter with the results of the investigation within sixty (60) days. The Filer will be provided information regarding the appeal process and State contact information.

K. The MHSA Coordinator may call the Filer during the sixty (60) day timeframe to inquire if the Filer is satisfied with the outcome of the investigation.

L. After exhausting the DHS-BHD MHSA IRP process, filers can access the State venues listed below:

1. Mental Health Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSAOC):
<https://mhsoac.ca.gov/>

2. Department of Health Care Services (DHCS): <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/>

3. California Mental Health Planning Council (CMHPC):
<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/CBHPC%20Overview.aspx>

M. Allegations of healthcare fraud, waste, or abuse should be referred directly to the Department of Health Services Compliance Officer for investigation at (707) 565-4936.

VI. Forms

A. MHS 302 MHSA Issue Resolution Form

VII. Attachments

Attachment #1: Sonoma DHS-BHD MHSA Issue Resolution Policy Log