

Subject: Access and Availability of Services

Requirements

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1. **Programs Affected:** All CCBHC Demonstration participants.
2. **Background and Purpose:** Community Mental Health Clinics (CMHCs) designated by the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) as Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) must provide timely access to evaluation and treatment in accordance with SAMHSA CCBHC Certification Criteria. *This bulletin describes how timely access and availability of services is defined for all CCBHCs.*
3. **SAMHSA CCBHC Criteria Authority**
 - 3.1. SAMHSA CCBHC certification criterion 2.a.1 requires the CCBHC environment to be safe, functional, clean, sanitary, and welcoming for everyone. CCBHCs are encouraged to operate tobacco-free campuses.
 - 3.2. Criterion 2.a.2 is informed by the Community Needs Assessment (CNA) and requires services to be provided during times that facilitate accessibility and meet the needs of the population served by the CCBHC, including some evening and weekend hours.
 - 3.3. Criterion 2.a.3 is informed by the CNA and requires the CCBHC to provide services at locations that ensure accessibility and meet the needs of the population to be served, and, as appropriate and feasible, in the homes of people receiving services.
 - 3.4. Criterion 2.a.4 requires that transportation or transportation vouchers for people receiving CCBHC services be provided to the extent possible with relevant funding or programs to facilitate access to services in alignment with the person-centered and family-centered treatment plan.
 - 3.5. Criterion 2.a.5 requires that the uses of telehealth/telemedicine, video conferencing, remote patient monitoring, asynchronous interventions, and other technologies, to the extent possible, in alignment with the preferences of the person receiving services to support access to all required services.
 - 3.6. Criterion 2.a.6, informed by the CNA, requires the CCBHC to conduct outreach, engagement, and retention activities to support inclusion and access for underserved individuals and populations.
 - 3.7. Criterion 2.a.7 requires that “Services are subject to all state standards for the provision of both voluntary and court- ordered services”.
 - 3.8. Criterion 2.a.8 requires that the CCBHC has a continuity of operations/disaster plan. The plan will include the ability to effectively notify staff, people receiving services, and healthcare and community partners when a disaster/emergency occurs or services are disrupted, alternative locations and methods to sustain service delivery and access to behavioral health medications, and health IT systems security/ransomware protection and

backup and access to these IT systems, including health records, in case of disaster.

3.9. Criterion 2.b.1 requires that: “All people new to receiving services, whether requesting or being referred for behavioral health services at the CCBHC, will, at the time of first contact, whether that contact is in-person, by telephone, or using other remote communication, receive a preliminary triage and risk assessment to determine acuity of needs. That screening may occur telephonically. The preliminary triage and risk assessment will be followed by:

- (1) an initial evaluation and
- (2) a comprehensive evaluation, with components of each specified in program requirement 4, all new people receiving services will receive a comprehensive evaluation to be completed within 60 calendar days of the first request for services. If the state has established independent screening and assessment processes for certain child and youth populations or other populations, the CCBHC should establish partnerships to incorporate findings and avoid duplication of effort.

3.10. Criterion 2.b.1 also requires if, at first contact, an emergency/crisis need is identified, then “appropriate action is taken immediately,” and: “If the triage identifies an urgent need, clinical services are provided, and the initial evaluation is completed within one business day of the time the request is made. If the triage identifies routine needs, services will be provided, and the initial evaluation completed within 10 business days.”

3.10.1 In addition to completing an eligibility determination, the initial face-to-face encounter with an individual seeking services should include the provision of a clinical intervention to address the individual’s immediate identified need.

4. Access Requirements

4.1. Emergency/crisis, urgent, and routine needs defined.

4.1.1. An *emergency/crisis* need is indicated when an individual presents a likelihood of immediate harm to self or others. The initial evaluation may be conducted via phone or through the use of other technology, but in person is preferred. If the initial evaluation is conducted telephonically, once the emergency is resolved, the individual receiving services must be seen in person at the next subsequent encounter and the initial evaluation reviewed.

4.1.2. An *urgent* need is indicated when an individual presents a need for service that, if not addressed immediately, could result in the individual becoming a danger to self or others or could cause a health risk. The initial evaluation is required within *one (1) business day* of the time the request is made.

4.1.3. A *routine* service need is indicated when a person requests services or follow-up, but otherwise presents no significant impairment in the ability to care for self and no apparent harm to self or others. The initial evaluation is required within *ten (10) business days*.

4.2. All CCBHCs must determine whether each call requesting service constitutes an emergency/crisis need for service and take immediate and appropriate action to address any emergency/crisis needs.

4.3. All CCBHCs are required to track and report the number and percentage of individuals seeking

services with emergency/crisis, urgent, and routine service needs.

4.4. All CCBHCs are required to track and report the average time from the date of first contact to the date when the individual is first seen face-to-face, an eligibility determination is completed, and initial services provided.

5. Same-Day/Next-Day Access Defined

5.1. A CCBHC is considered to be providing same-day/next-day access if any individual contacting the organization in person or by phone during any day of the work week is given the opportunity to meet with qualified staff who will complete an eligibility determination and provide initial services on the same workday or the next workday, at the CCBHC site or via telehealth.

5.2. All CCBHCs are required to track and report the number of individuals receiving same day access services.

6. Application of Access Requirements to CCBHCs that Provide Same-Day/Next-Day Access

6.1. For individuals with emergency/crisis needs, “first contact” is defined as the date on which an individual seeking services calls, or presents in person, ***whichever comes first***.

6.2. For individuals with urgent or routine needs, “first contact” is defined as the date on which an individual presents in person at the CCBHC seeking services.

6.3. For CCBHCs providing same-day/next-day access, the required preliminary triage and risk assessment to determine acuity of needs shall occur on the date that an individual first presents in person seeking services.

7. Application of Access Requirements to CCBHCs that Do Not Provide Same-Day/Next-Day Access

7.1. For CCBHCs that do not provide same day/next day access, “first contact” is defined as the date on which an individual seeking services calls, or presents in person, ***whichever comes first***.

7.2. When a call is received, if the call does not constitute an emergency/crisis call, the CCBHC must determine whether the call is an urgent or routine call.

7.3. For CCBHCs that do not provide same-day/next-day access, the required preliminary triage and risk assessment to determine acuity of needs shall occur on the date that an individual seeking services calls, or presents in person, ***whichever comes first***.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this implementation bulletin is for general information purposes only. For more details on the specific subject area covered in this bulletin, please refer to the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Certification Updated March 2023.

¹<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/ccbhc-criteria-2023.pdf>