

A Message for Practitioners Prescribing BHRS

VBH-PA views Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS) as a valuable treatment modality and recognizes the skill and clinical knowledge of the evaluator. The evaluator has the potential to significantly and positively impact the quality of treatment, as well as function as the team leader.

The TSS schedule is a tool that has been successfully employed by two of the five Pennsylvania HealthChoices Managed Care Organizations to more fully utilize the expertise and experience of the evaluator. It also addresses frustration that is sometimes experienced by families seeking treatment by providing a structure for treatment delivery. Services should be delivered in such a manner that individual and family strengths are enhanced, natural supports are developed and strengthened, and self-empowerment and independence are achieved.

Psychiatrists and psychologists prescribing children's mental health treatment should consider the following factors for every child:

- Role of all child serving systems for this child
- Natural supports
- Severity of presenting symptoms
- Clinical case conceptualization
- Entire spectrum of mental health treatment options

When BHRS is indicated as the most appropriate medical intervention, the rationale for these services is held to the same standard as any other treatment modality. Prescriptions are expected to be recovery focused, as well as reflect current best practices and CASSP principles.

Options for additional data collection:

At times, it is sound practice to recommend additional assessment and data collection in order to enhance case conceptualization and treatment planning. This can be accomplished in various ways:

1. The prescriber may recommend Mobile Therapy (MT) or Behavioral Specialist Consultant (BSC) to begin immediately, and Therapeutic Staff Support (TSS) to begin a few weeks later during the same authorization period. This permits the MT/BSC to assess the strengths and needs of the child and family, as well as develop effective treatment interventions for the TSS to use in working with the child.
2. The prescriber may also recommend BSC to conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) in accordance with VBH-PA's Policy and Procedure regarding recommending, authorizing and implementing the Functional Behavioral Assessment.

The FBA involves gathering data to inform a theory about the causative and sustaining factors for complex behavioral patterns, and creating a treatment plan based on this assessment. This should be considered for all children diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum, as well as children with mental health disorders manifested in complicated or intractable behavioral symptoms.

When additional assessment and data collection is recommended using either model noted above, the prescriber can then make additional recommendations by either writing a brief addendum to the original evaluation, or reevaluating the child if needed.

Medical Necessity Criteria:

The prescriber is also expected to be fully cognizant of Pennsylvania's Appendix T, which outlines the medical necessity criteria for BHRS, and follow these criteria when prescribing services. This includes multisystem collaboration, natural supports, consideration of the entire continuum of behavioral health services as well as involvement, skill building and skill transfer with the family as part of each prescription.

VBH-PA has compiled a questionnaire (see attached) for practitioners to use when prescribing BHRS, which is based upon Appendix T criteria. Prescribers may find this useful in determining if services are being recommended appropriately.

The prescriber is expected to educate families on the nature, role, expectations and limits around BSC, MT and TSS services when making treatment recommendations. Despite the legitimacy of numerous needs in many of the families, BHRS involves a constellation of "treatment" services. BHRS is not to be a substitute for child care, transportation, respite, educational supports or mentoring.

TSS Scheduling:

VBH-PA will be requiring clinicians to specify the actual day of the week, hours of the day and rationale behind Therapeutic Staff Support prescriptions. The intention is to prescribe services when interventions will have most clinical impact during those times when problematic behaviors are likely to occur. The goal is not to provide TSS in a global manner with the goal of having TSS intervention during all the times when problems may occur. There will be times during the prescribed hours when the unwanted behavior does not present, and teaching and practice of skills will occur. There will also be times when the youth will demonstrate the targeted behavior without the TSS present, allowing opportunity for the youth or responsible adult to demonstrate newly developed skills.

Natural Supports and Transition Planning:

BHRS is intended to be a recovery oriented intervention, which enables the child and family to function and develop to progress independent of these highly intrusive services.

Developing natural supports, teaching skills to identified support persons and involving other child-serving systems are all primary functions of BHRS. During the evaluation process, practitioners should guide and support families in accessing local resources, as well as all appropriate educational, substance abuse and other child serving systems. Transition planning reflected in evaluations should be specific, and incorporate other clinic based services as appropriate, while beginning trials of reduced frequency of BHRS interventions.

VBH-PA worked together throughout 2010 with BHRS providers and county staff to enhance the use of natural supports in BHR service delivery. The expectation is that 25% or more of all interventions will be delivered through natural supports. Independent Prescribers as the treatment team leaders are encouraged to review the use of these resources during reevaluations in order to demonstrate collaboration with the providers.

VBH-PA developed the *BHRS Recovery Toolkit* in collaboration with BHRS providers and county mental health partners, in part to help providers understand how to deliver BHRS with a recovery focus. Prescribers may find the information contained in the toolkit helpful in framing prescribed services as part of the recovery process. The *BHRS Recovery Toolkit* is available on the VBH-PA website.