SCOPE:

County MH/MR Administrators  
Base Service Unit Directors  
Community Residential MR Facility Directors

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Bulletin is to explain who pays for psychological testing to diagnose mental retardation in children and adults.

BACKGROUND:

Some counties were previously uncertain regarding payments for psychological testing (IQ and adaptive functioning tests) to diagnose mental retardation in children and adults.

DISCUSSION:

The attached Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services’ (OMHSAS) Policy Clarification answers the questions about payments for psychological testing to diagnose mental retardation.
Issue Clarification #:03-03          Applicability: All Zones
Date of Receipt:6-30-03        Source Documentation:

Question/Issue:

Submitted by: Bob Derr, OMR
County Authority: All Counties
Topic Area: Psychological Testing

Does HealthChoices pay for psychological testing (IQ and adaptive functioning tests) to be used to diagnose mental retardation?

Background/Context Provided within the Request :

Counties have noted that sometimes the IQ and adaptive functioning tests are paid by HealthChoices, and sometimes they are not. It seems to vary from county to county. The Lehigh/Capital BH RFP, IV-4. A. In-Plan Services states, “The program includes medically necessary mental health, substance abuse and behavioral services. 1) The BH-MCO will provide timely access to diagnostic, assessment, referral and treatment services for members for the following benefits: f. Psychiatric outpatient clinic, licensed psychologist and psychiatric services.” Consequently, many counties are interpreting this to mean that the IQ and adaptive functioning tests are paid services.

Some counties have a backlog of requests for IQ and adaptive functioning tests used to determine a diagnosis of mental retardation and consequent eligibility for services through the County MH-MR Program. We encourage OMHSAS to consider issuing a policy clarification that states “HealthChoices will pay for psychological evaluations and assessments, such as IQ testing and adaptive functioning tests, to help determine a diagnosis of mental retardation in children and adults.”
Psychological evaluations for the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders, including mental retardation, are MA compensable for MA-eligible children or adults and are therefore covered under HealthChoices. For children, the evaluation may be conducted in either the psychologist’s office or an Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic or Partial Hospital setting. For adults, the evaluation may only be conducted in an Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic or Partial Hospital setting.

Citation: 55 Pa.Code Chapter 1153 Outpatient Psychiatric Services, Section 1153.11 relating to types of services covered sets forth: “Medical Assistance (MA) Program coverage for outpatient psychiatric clinics and partial hospitalization facilities is limited to professional medical and psychiatric services for the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders, including mental retardation, as specified in the MA Program Fee Schedule.” Further Section 1153.52(a)(5) sets forth the following payment condition: “Diagnostic psychological and intellectual evaluations shall be administered and interpreted only by a licensed psychologist or by a psychologist in preparation for licensure under the direct supervision of a licensed psychologist.”

______________________________________
Director, Bureau of Operations       # 03-03
and Quality Management        Date: 8-20-03
To:        Deputy Secretary Erney
          Deputy Secretary’s Representatives
          OMHSAS Field Offices
          Department of Health and Welfare, Agency Representatives
          County Representatives
          Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations

From:    Bureau of Operations and Quality Management
          Bureau of Policy and Program Development

Enclosed is HealthChoices Behavioral Health Policy Clarification developed by
the Department of Public Welfare, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse
Services. If you have questions relating to these documents please contact your
OMHSAS Representative, or contact Jim Myers at (717) 772-7928

Linda Zelch, Acting Director
Bureau of Operations and Quality Management

Jerry Kopelmen, Director
Bureau of Policy and Program Development