



DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
Olympia, Washington

TITLE: USE OF PSYCHOACTIVE MEDICATIONS POLICY 5.16

Authority: Chapters 71A.12, 71A.18 RCW

BACKGROUND

Psychoactive medications are primarily used for persons who have a mental illness. They have proven to be a very effective form of treatment for major forms of mental illnesses. They may also be helpful for persons with developmental disabilities in whom it is more difficult to make a clear diagnosis of mental illness but may nonetheless be suffering from mental illness. Some people may express their mental illness through severe problem behaviors. It may be difficult to tell in advance if a person will benefit from psychoactive medications.

Psychoactive medications have potential side effects which range from mild to severe. Regular monitoring for side effects and evaluation of medication effectiveness is especially important for individuals who have a reduced capacity to communicate symptoms of potential side effects.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all persons who receive DDD contracted residential services and services through State Operated Living Alternatives (SOLA) funded by the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

POLICY

Persons with developmental disabilities and mental illness and/or serious behavior problems shall have adequate access to treatment with psychoactive medications and protection from serious side effects or the inappropriate use of these medications.

PROCEDURES

If it appears that a person has a mental illness or would benefit from taking a psychoactive medication, the person should be referred for a professional assessment. If available, it is

recommended this assessment be with a psychiatrist, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner working under the supervision of a psychiatrist. If not available, a physician may be contacted.

A. Documentation of Psychoactive Medications

For those persons who take a prescribed psychoactive medication, the agency will document the following information:

1. A mental health diagnosis or a description of the behaviors for which the medication is prescribed;
2. The name(s) and purpose(s) of the medication(s) prescribed;
3. What will be considered an adequate trial of the medication (i.e., the length of time and the dosage level which is considered necessary to determine if the medication will be effective);
4. The criteria which will be used to determine if the medication is effective (i.e., what changes in mood, thought, behavior, or functioning would be considered evidence that the medication is effective);
5. Potential side effects and instructions on how the person should be monitored for those side effects;
6. A brief summary of the expected plan for use of the medication (i.e., that the medication will be discontinued if found ineffective, or the long-term plan for use if found to be effective);
7. Plans to support the person in positive ways which will assist in the treatment or reduction of the person's mental illness, or reduce or eliminate the person's need to engage in problem behaviors; and
8. Informed consent by the person and/or their guardian for administration of a medication. This will be documented on a form which lists justification for the use of the medication, including the benefits and potential side effects.

B. Monitoring of Psychoactive Medications

1. The agency shall monitor to help determine if the medication is being effective based upon the criteria as recommended by the prescribing professional. If the medication appears not to have the desired effects, the agency shall communicate this to the prescribing professional and discuss alternatives.

2. The agency shall continually monitor for potential side effects and communicate any concerns and/or noted side effects to the prescribing professional.
3. The agency shall request the prescribing professional review medications at least every three (3) months unless recommended differently by the prescribing professional.
4. A summary of the use of psychoactive medications shall be sent to the DDD regional office annually. The summary shall include the name of the individual, current medications, and total daily dosages.

EXCEPTIONS

Any exceptions to this policy must be reviewed and approved in writing by the DDD regional administrator.

DEFINITIONS

"Psychoactive medications" means medications which are prescribed for the purpose of enabling a person to perform better, managing a person's behavior, or treating a mental illness. They possess the ability to alter mood, anxiety level, behavior, cognitive processes, or mental tension. Common groups of psychoactive medications are antipsychotic or neuroleptic medications, antidepressants, antianxiety medications, sedative/hypnotics, psychostimulants, and mood stabilizers.

SUPERSESSON

None

Approved: /s/ Norm Davis Date: 1/30/1996
Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities