BACKGROUND

Psychoactive medications have proven to be a very effective treatment for many forms of mental illness. As with other prescription medications, psychoactive medications have the potential for unwanted side effects. 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.

Psychoactive medications are not necessarily the first or only treatment of choice, particularly for challenging behaviors. Positive behavior support approaches may be equally or more effective and treatment decisions should always be made on an individual basis. Refer to Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) Policies 5.14, Positive Behavior Support, and 5.15, Use of Restrictive Procedures for additional information and requirements.

PURPOSE

This policy establishes guidelines for assisting a person with mental health issues or persistent challenging behavior to access accurate information about psychoactive medications and treatment, and to make fully informed choices.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the use of psychoactive medications by persons who receive medication services through DDD certified and contracted residential services, including State Operated Living Alternatives (SOLA).
DEFINITIONS

Medication administration is the direct application of a prescribed medication whether by injection, inhalation, ingestion, or other means, to the body of the client by an individual legally authorized to do so.

Medication assistance is assistance with self-administration of medication rendered by a nonpractitioner to a client receiving certified community residential services and supports in accordance with RCW 69.41 and chapter 246-888 WAC.

Medication service is any service provided by a certified community residential services and support provider related to medication administration or medication assistance provided through nurse delegation and medication assistance.

Psychoactive means possessing the ability to alter mood, anxiety level, behavior, cognitive processes, or mental tension, usually applied to pharmacological agents.

Psychoactive medications means medications prescribed to improve or stabilize mood, mental status or behavior. Psychoactive medications include antipsychotics/neuroleptics, atypical antipsychotics, antidepressants, stimulants, sedatives/hypnotics, and anti-mania and anti-anxiety drugs.

POLICY

Psychoactive medications are prescribed to enable a person to function better, reduce challenging behavior, or treat a mental illness. Persons with developmental disabilities and mental illness, and/or persistent challenging behavior shall have appropriate access to information and treatment with psychoactive medications, and reasonable protection from serious side effects or the inappropriate use of these medications.

If a psychoactive medication is used to treat a physical condition (e.g., sleep or seizure disorder), the requirements of this policy do not apply. Positive behavior support strategies, if warranted, should be integrated in the person’s overall support plan.

PROCEDURES

A. Assessment

1. If the person appears to be displaying symptoms of mental illness and/or persistent challenging behavior, refer the person for a professional assessment. It is important to rule out any physical or medical conditions that may be causing or contributing to the behavior. It is recommended that a psychiatrist, physician’s assistant, general practitioner, or nurse practitioner (ARNP) with experience in treating people with developmental disabilities conduct this assessment.
2. Prior to the assessment, staff will prepare a psychiatric referral summary and send or take this to the treatment professional conducting the assessment. The summary should briefly describe the frequency and severity of the person’s symptoms or behaviors and what has been tried previously. See Attachment A for sample form, Psychiatric Referral Summary.

Note: Some individuals may prefer to visit their treatment professional independently and without the assistance of residential agency staff. In such cases, respect the person’s choice and document this in the person’s record and Plan of Care (POC). Also document in the service plan/POC whether the person is assessed as capable of self-monitoring his/her medications or requires assistance.

B. Treatment Plan

1. After the assessment, if the treatment professional recommends psychoactive medication, the prescribing professional or agency staff will document this in a Psychoactive Medication Treatment Plan. See Attachment B for sample form, Psychoactive Medication Treatment Plan. The plan must include the following:

a. A description of the behaviors, symptoms or conditions for which the medication is prescribed and a mental health diagnosis, if available;

b. The name, dosage, and frequency of the medication (subsequent changes in dosage may be documented in the person’s medical record);

c. The length of time considered sufficient to determine if the medication is effective (i.e., treatment trial);

d. The behavioral criteria to determine whether the medication is effective (i.e., what changes in behavior, mood, thought, or functioning are considered evidence that the medication is effective); and

e. The anticipated schedule of visits with the prescribing professional.

2. The PMTP must be updated whenever there is a change in medication.

3. The prescribing professional is responsible for obtaining informed consent when necessary from the person or, if applicable, his/her legal representative. Agencies must retain a copy of the signed consent form, if available, in the person’s record. If the person’s legal representative refuses to give consent, the agency should encourage the legal representative to meet with the treatment professional to discuss the medication issue.
4. Agency staff will review with the person and his/her legal representative the name, purpose, potential side effects and any known potential drug interactions of the medication. Agency staff should base such discussion on the written information supplied by the dispensing pharmacy whenever possible. See Attachment C for sample form, Information Regarding Psychoactive Medication.

5. Agencies must have available to staff and clients an information sheet for each psychoactive medication that is being used by persons served by the agency. This information sheet should describe potential side effects and potential adverse drug interactions that may occur from use of the medication. This information sheet should be one provided by the dispensing pharmacy or based on information provided by the dispensing pharmacy whenever possible.

6. There may be situations in which a person’s legal representative is unavailable or unwilling to provide consent. Where, in the physician’s opinion, no significant risks are associated with the medication, the agency should act in the person’s best interest and assist the person in obtaining and taking the medication.

7. If positive supports have been identified that will assist in the treatment, reduction, or elimination of the person’s symptoms or behaviors, document these in a written plan.

C. Monitoring Psychoactive Medications

1. The agency must monitor the person to help determine if the medication is being effective based on criteria identified in the PMTP. If the medication does not appear to have the desired effects, the agency must communicate this to the prescribing professional.

2. The agency must observe the person for any changes in behavior or health that might be side effects of the medication and inform the prescribing professional of any concerns.

3. The agency should request that the prescribing professional see the person at least every three (3) months unless the prescribing professional recommends a different schedule. Document the visitation schedule in the person’s treatment plan.

4. Continued need for the medication and possible reduction should be assessed at least annually by the prescribing professional. See Attachment D for sample form, Psychoactive Medication Treatment Plan: Annual Continuation of Medication.
EXCEPTIONS

Any exceptions to this policy must have the prior written approval of the division director.

SUPERSESSION

DDD Policy 5.16
Issued November 1, 2003

DDD Policy 5.16
Issued July 1, 2001

DDD Policy 5.16
Issued May 26, 1999

DDD Policy 5.16
Issued January 30, 1996

Approved: /s/ Linda Rolfe  Date: 9/1/2005
Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities
PSYCHIATRIC REFERRAL SUMMARY

Client Name: ________________________   DOB: _______   Age: ____    Gender:  M   F
Address: __________________________________________________________________
Supporting Agency: ____________________________________________________________
Contact Person: _____________________________________  Phone: ________________
Legal Representative: ________________________________  Phone: ________________
Primary Physician: ___________________________________  Phone: ________________
Other Physician: ____________________________________  Phone: ________________
DDD Case Manager: _________________________________  Phone: ________________
Form completed by: __________________________________  Date:  _________________
Relationship to client: ________________________________________________________

Briefly describe why this person is being referred for a psychiatric evaluation:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Symptom(s) or behavior(s) of concern (define and state frequency and severity of each symptom or behavior):
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Previous mental health involvement (list past counseling, behavioral interventions, diagnoses, medications, psychiatric hospitalizations, crisis team contact, etc.):
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
PSYCHIATRIC REFERRAL SUMMARY (continued)

List other agency contacts and phone numbers (employment, vocational, mental health, other therapists, etc.):

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

What has been tried previously (list intervention and results, if known):

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

List diagnoses/medical concerns:

Current medications and daily dose:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

List any known unusual or adverse reactions to medications:

____________________________________________________________________________

Describe the following characteristics of the person (if not already listed):

Sleep pattern ________________________________________________________________

Mood/affect ________________________________________________________________

Eating/appetite _____________________________________________________________

Thinking/cognition __________________________________________________________

Memory _________________________________________________________________

Anxiety level ______________________________________________________________

Hyperactivity ______________________________________________________________

Sensory impairments _________________________________________________________
PSYCHIATRIC REFERRAL SUMMARY (continued)

Allergies ________________________________________________________________

Gynecological problems _____________________________________________________

Urinary problems __________________________________________________________

Communication impairment ________________________________________________

Other Information that may be pertinent:
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
PSYCHOACTIVE MEDICATION TREATMENT PLAN

Name: ____________________________  DOB: _________  Date: __________

Supporting Agency: ____________________________  Phone: ________________

Description of behavior(s) for which medication is prescribed and a mental health diagnosis, if available:

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Medication(s):  Dosage and Frequency:

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Trial period (how long before an effect should be noticed):

___________________________________________________________________________

Behavioral criteria to evaluate effectiveness of medication (what changes in behavior, mood, thought or functioning should be expected):

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Potential interactions with other drugs/food:

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Prescribing Professional: ____________________________  Phone: ________________

Return for medication monitoring:  □ 1 month  □ 3 months  □ 6 months  □ Other: ________

Name of Person Completing Form
INFORMATION REGARDING PSYCHOACTIVE MEDICATION

Name: ________________________________  DOB: _______  Date: __________

Description of behavior for which medication is prescribed and mental health diagnosis, if available:

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Medication(s):  Dosage and Frequency:

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Information on medication: attach information sheet(s) that describe the medication, dosage ranges, possible side effects and potential adverse drug interactions.

Questions regarding the use of this medication should be addressed to the prescribing professional listed below.

Name: ________________________________  Phone: ______________

Information reviewed with the client/legal representative on: _____________________  
___________________________________________________________________________

Name of Person Completing Form

To be completed by client/legal representative:

I have received information on this medication, the reasons for its use, and I have had the opportunity to get my questions about it answered.

Signature of Client  Date
___________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Client’s Legal Representative  Date

___________________________________________________________________________
PSYCHOACTIVE MEDICATION TREATMENT PLAN
ANNUAL CONTINUATION OF MEDICATION

Name: ________________________________  DOB: _________  Date: ____________
Address: ____________________________________________________________________
Supporting Agency: ______________________________  Phone: _________________

Description of behavior for which medication is prescribed and mental health diagnosis, if available:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Medication(s):  Dosage and Frequency:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Positive results of this medication and justification for continuation:
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Plan to continue use of this medication:
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Schedule return visit in:
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Name of Person Completing Form: _____________________________________________