



MICHELLE BAASS
DIRECTOR

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Health Care Services



GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

DATE: May 17, 2022

Behavioral Health Information Notice No.: 22-030

TO: California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Association for Alcohol/Drug Educators
California Association of Alcohol & Drug Program Executives, Inc.
California Association of DUI Treatment Programs
California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies
California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies
California Hospital Association
California Opioid Maintenance Providers
California State Association of Counties
Coalition of Alcohol and Drug Associations
County Behavioral Health Directors
County Behavioral Health Directors Association of
California County Drug & Alcohol Administrators

SUBJECT: Plastic Bag Use in Mental Health Rehabilitation Centers (MHRCs) and
Psychiatric Health Facilities (PHFs)

PURPOSE: To provide guidance and ensure that MHRCs and PHFs are free of
plastic bags that could be used in a suicide attempt.

REFERENCE: California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 9, Sections 784.00 (k);
786.19, Title 22, Section 77151; and Welfare and Institution Code
Section 4080, subdivision (e) and Health and Safety Code Section
1275.1

BACKGROUND:

In 2017, California's Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) was directed by the Legislature to develop a new suicide prevention plan for the state. The MHSOAC Striving for Zero: California's Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention 2020-2025 report was finalized in 2020. According to the MHSOAC's [California's Strategic Plan for Suicide and Prevention \(2020-2025\)](#), hanging and suffocation are two of the three most common ways individuals died by suicide in 2017 in the state of California. In an effort to prevent suicide connected with plastic bag suffocation in DHCS' licensed 24-hour psychiatric facilities, DHCS reminds MHRCs and PHFs to ensure that their Suicide Prevention Policies and Procedures are reviewed at

Behavioral Health
MS 2710

P.O. Box 997413, Sacramento, CA 95899-7413

Phone: (916) 440-7800

Internet Address: <http://www.DHCS.ca.gov>

least annually and updated as needed, and sufficient to address events which could jeopardize the patient safety, such as threats to health, security or well-being of any patient/client. (See Cal. Code Regs., Tit. 22, § 77151; Cal. Code Regs., Tit. 9, § 784.00.) PHF regulation requires the governing body be responsible for ensuring all the services provided to patients/clients, including care and treatment, are adequate and safe at all times. (Cal. Code Regs. tit. 22, § 77081.) MHRCs must provide safe and adequate care, and be in good condition at all times to ensure the safety and well-being of patients. (See Cal. Code Regs., Tit. 9, §§ 783.18, 785.00, 787.15.)

POLICY:

To prevent suicides associated with plastic bags and ensure a safe and secure environment, all MHRCs and PHFs should promptly review and update their Suicide Prevention Policies to include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

- Methods by which the facility will utilize plastic bags only in areas inaccessible to clients;
- Specify that plastic bag usage is restricted to kitchen and dietary areas accessible only by staff.
- Methods by which the facility will restrict client/patient access to plastic bags in dietary areas that are also used as common areas; and
- Methods by which the facility will prohibit the use of plastic bags in client/patient rooms, bathrooms, common rooms, and outside areas, including common areas where clients/patients are under the supervision of staff.

If you have any questions regarding this Information Notice, please contact the Mental Health Licensing Section at MHLC@dhcs.ca.gov or (916) 323-1864.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Janelle Ito-Orille, Chief
Licensing and Certification Division