



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



EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR

DATE: December 1, 2016

MHSUDS INFORMATION NOTICE NO.: 16-060

TO: COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIRECTORS
COUNTY DRUG & ALCOHOL ADMINISTRATORS
COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AGENCIES
COALITION OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ASSOCIATIONS
CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF ALCOHOL & DRUG PROGRAM EXECUTIVES, INC.
CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATION WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Information Notice is to share with County Mental Health Plans (MHPs) the “California Guidelines for the Use of Psychotropic Medication with Children and Youth in Foster Care,” which is a statement of best practices for the treatment of children and youth in out-of-home care. The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) is sharing these guidelines pursuant to Senate Bill (SB) 1174 (McGuire, Chapter 840, Statutes of 2016), which requires DHCS to disseminate the guidelines annually through existing communications with Medi-Cal providers.

BACKGROUND

DHCS and the California Department of Social Services jointly released “the California Guidelines for the Use of Psychotropic Medication with Children and Youth in Foster Care.” This inter-departmental effort produced a guide to best practices for the treatment of mental health conditions affecting children and youth in out-of-home care.

POLICY

While not mandatory, the Guidelines are intended to be used by Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) providers when prescribing psychotropic medication to children and youth in foster care as a SMHS activity or as part of an array of SMHS.

The Guidelines outline:

- Basic principles and values;
- Expectations regarding the development and monitoring of treatment plans;
- Principles for emotional and behavioral health care, psychosocial services, and non-pharmacological treatments;
- Principles for informed consent to medications; and
- Principles governing medication safety.

The Guidelines may evolve over time in response to updated research, evolution of best practices, and in response to feedback from youth, families, prescribers, other providers, and additional community stakeholders. For these reasons, the Guidelines will be reviewed annually and updated as needed. The Guidelines may be accessed using the following link:

http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/pharmacy/Documents/QIP_Guidelines.pdf.

DHCS encourages MHPs to apply these guidelines, and share them with their contracted providers for use in Medi-Cal SMHS clinical practice.

Questions regarding this notice may be directed to your DHCS Mental Health Services Division, County Support Unit Liaison. A current list of county liaison assignments may be found at: <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/CountySupportUnit.aspx>.

Sincerely,

Karen Baylor, Ph.D., LMFT, Deputy Director
Mental Health & Substance Use Disorder Services