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JUVENILE MENTAL HEALTH SCREENER FAQs

This document describes common questions and information related to Delaware's policies around juvenile involuntary civil commitments.

BACKGROUND TO JUVENILE INVOLUNTARY CIVIL COMMITMENTS

Title [16 of the Delaware Code, Chapter 50](#) describes the emergency detention process for children under age 18 in mental health crisis. This process is in place to help children obtain inpatient hospitalization for mental health treatment, if deemed necessary by a Juvenile Mental Health Screener and voluntary admission is not possible. Emergency detention is only used if the child's parent or legal guardian is unwilling to consent to voluntary treatment or can't be identified or located. A child can be emergently detained for 24-72 hours. The detainment is only extended up to 72 hours if, within the initial 24 hours of detainment, it is unknown whether a parent or legal guardian will provide consent for the child's voluntary admission for inpatient mental health treatment. The involuntary civil commitment process must be initiated as soon as it is verified a parent or legal guardian will not be completing a voluntary admission for the child.

CHANGES TO POLICY

Delaware has expanded the pool of trained clinicians who can now directly facilitate emergency admission to in-state psychiatric hospitals. Under this new process, licensed mental health clinicians who work for, or are under contract with, the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF) or a Delaware licensed mental health hospital may apply to be credentialed as Juvenile Mental Health Screeners. The DSCYF Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS) is responsible for credentialing Juvenile Mental Health Screeners, who will assess children under age 18 and complete a Juvenile 24-Hour Emergency Detention Form if they determine involuntary placement in a psychiatric hospital is needed. Previously, mental health screeners credentialed by the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) performed assessments for both children and adults. Children were often seen by mental health screeners in hospital emergency rooms to be assessed for inpatient psychiatric hospitalization. Now, Juvenile Mental Health Screeners will have the ability to assess children in their homes or in the community.

QUESTIONS

Who can fill out and complete a Juvenile 24-Hour Emergency Detention Form?

A Juvenile Mental Health Screener, who has been credentialed by DPBHS, can fill out a Juvenile 24-Hour Emergency Detention Form in consultation with another Juvenile Mental Health Screener, when involuntary inpatient psychiatric treatment is needed. In addition to meeting job-specific qualification requirements, credentialed Juvenile Mental Health Screeners must complete four hours of training both initially and every two years when seeking to be re-credentialed.

Emergency room doctors and psychiatrists, as well as licensed mental health clinicians who work for, or are under contract with, DSCYF or a Delaware licensed mental health hospital are eligible to apply for certification as a Juvenile Mental Health Screener. Specifically, the professionals who could become Juvenile Mental Health Screeners include, but are not limited to: physicians at a hospital; physicians, licensed mental health clinicians and licensed nurses with a BSN degree at a designated psychiatric treatment facility, licensed crisis intervention staff at the 24/7 Mobile Response Stabilization Services call center (Child Crisis), licensed staff at DPBHS residential facilities, and licensed staff within the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services.

Does a child still need to be taken to the emergency department to be assessed for emergency detention at a psychiatric treatment facility?

No. A credentialed Juvenile Mental Health Screener, outside of an emergency department setting, can assess a child and recommend emergency detention, if the child is unable to be voluntarily admitted by their parent or legal guardian for inpatient mental health treatment.

How is law enforcement involved with this process?

Sometimes, individuals will call law enforcement when a child is experiencing a mental health crisis and is a danger to themselves or others. In such cases, the responding officer should call the 24-Hour Mobile Response and Stabilization Services call center (Child Crisis) so the child may obtain an emergency assessment from a credentialed Juvenile Mental Health Screener. If emergency detention is deemed necessary by a credentialed Juvenile Mental Health Screener, the law enforcement officer could transport the individual to the psychiatric hospital directly.

Additionally, the crisis team from the Mobile Response and Stabilization Services call center could reach out to law enforcement to transport a client to a psychiatric hospital after they have completed an assessment and determined an emergency detention is needed.

Where can an emergency detention assessment take place?

A Juvenile Mental Health Screener can perform a mental health assessment in the community, where the child is located when the Mobile Response and Stabilization Services call center is contacted.

Can a psychiatric hospital still refuse to take a child for an emergency detention under this new process?

Yes. If a psychiatric hospital is full or otherwise unable to meet the needs of the child. If no psychiatric hospital is able to admit the child, such child should be taken to an emergency room to wait for an available bed at a psychiatric hospital, if the child cannot remain safely in the community.

KEY PHONE NUMBERS

- If a child is in mental health crisis, please call the 24-Hour Mobile Response and Stabilization Services call center (Child Crisis). Call 1-800-969-4357.
- For general behavioral health treatment information, contact the ACCESS Unit (“DPBHS Information and Referral Unit”). Call weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 302-633-2571 or 1-800-722-7710. E-mail at [DSCYF Intake General@delaware.gov](mailto:DSCYF_Intake_General@delaware.gov).