

Behavioral Health Services (BHS) – Information Notice

To:	BHS Mental Health Service Providers
From:	Behavioral Health Services
Date:	August 25, 2020
Title	Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Referrals

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) is the FDA approved use of medications in combination with behavioral therapeutic interventions to effectively treat Substance Use Disorders (SUD). Currently, aside from medications for nicotine use, there are only approved medications for opioid and alcohol use disorders. MAT stabilizes the brain and helps to break the craving and withdrawal cycle, which may persist for years after the last use. By reducing or eliminating cravings and withdrawal symptoms, MAT allows clients to fully benefit from counseling and peer support. All clients with moderate to severe opioid or alcohol use disorders should be informed about the importance of getting evaluated for the use of MAT.

How does MAT help?

- Reduces or eliminates withdrawal symptoms
- Reduces or eliminates cravings
- Blocks the feel-good effects of opioids and alcohol
- Stabilizes brain chemistry that drives motivation and bonding with others

Mental health providers who are working with clients diagnosed with a co-occurring opioid and/or alcohol use disorder, should be aware of when to offer a referral for a MAT assessment. Although it is outside the scope of practice for non-prescribing staff to make specific medication recommendations, staff can recommend a referral for MAT at the intake appointment and at other points in the treatment process, as clinically indicated. Mental health providers are encouraged to use motivational interviewing to help clients who would benefit from medication treatment to consider this option. Clients with an opioid and/or stimulant use disorder should be referred or linked to naloxone treatment to prevent overdose risk. For clients who consent to involvement and communication with family or other support systems, educational information about MAT and naloxone is also recommended.

Serious incidents related to an opioid or alcohol overdose must include a review of the admissions process to refer clients to MAT and plan of correction if referral was not offered. For clients not already referred, submission of evidence that the client has been referred or a rationale as to why the client was not referred must be provided.

Where is MAT offered?

- Narcotic Treatment Programs
- Outpatient SUD Treatment Programs
- Primary Care settings
- Emergency Departments and Hospitals
- Residential Treatment Facilities

Information on MAT programs can be accessed through the Provider Directory on the Optum website (www.optumsandiego.com) or by calling the Access and Crisis Line (ACL) at 1 (888) 724-7240. ACL clinicians have been trained on the use of the American Society of Addiction Medicine criteria to assist clients with SUD in identifying treatment needs and determining the appropriate level of care.

For More Information:

- Contact your Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR) or Heather Parson, LMFT, Interim Behavioral Health Program Coordinator, heather.parson@sdcounty.ca.gov, 619-584-5016
- Email: QIMatters.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov