

SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH SYSTEM  
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES DIVISION

DATE: October 12, 2010

BHRS POLICY: 10-03  
SUBJECT: Managing Client Risk on High Temperature Days  
AUTHORITY: Local  
SUPERSEDES: New Policy

#### POLICY

BHRS Staff and staff of contracted providers will make every effort to assure the health and safety of clients on high temperature days. In all of the circumstances described in this policy, particular attention should be paid to the comfort and safety of clients who are prescribed anti-psychotics, tricyclic anti-depressants & Lithium because of the potential negative impact of these medications on thermal regulation.

#### PROTOCOL

This protocol will be triggered by predicted temperatures of 85 degrees or higher. It may also be triggered at lower temperatures if a combination of heat and air pollution has led to a County-wide heat emergency declaration. It will remain in effect until the actual daytime temperature drops below 85 degrees for 24 hours or the County revokes the declared heat emergency.

#### Cordilleras

- Swamp coolers, fans and other mechanical means to cool and circulate air will be available and put into use whenever the indoor temperature reaches 80 degrees.
- Water and other cool drinks, iced treats, and ice cubes will be readily available for clients and staff in the locked facility and the suites.
- Nursing staff will observe clients in the locked unit every 30 minutes and will strongly urge increased fluid intake.
- Nursing staff and residential staff will observe the clothing chosen by the clients and suggest alternatives if inappropriate clothing for the temperature is being worn.
- Clients will be requested to remain indoors or to avoid direct sun outdoors.
- Staff will consult with physicians immediately concerning clients who appear to be experiencing unusual lethargy, respiratory problems, and/or who have elevated temperatures.

### Residential Treatment Facilities (ex. Hawthorne House, Redwood House; P-90)

- For facilities without air conditioning, swamp coolers, fans and/or other mechanical means to cool and circulate air will be available and put into use whenever the indoor temperature reaches 80 degrees.
- Water and other cool drinks, iced treats, and ice cubes will be readily available for clients and staff.
- Residential staff and case managers will observe the clothing chosen by the clients and suggest alternatives if inappropriate clothing for the temperature is being worn.
- Clients will be requested to remain indoors or to avoid direct sun outdoors.
- Staff will be aware of air-conditioned daytime respite locations in the near-by community and will help clients get to these cooler locations.
- Staff will consult with physicians immediately concerning clients who appear to be experiencing unusual lethargy, respiratory problems, and/or who have elevated temperatures.

### Clients in Out-of-County Locked Facilities

- Adult Resource Management will call all facilities housing San Mateo County clients and create/maintain a list of facilities that are not air-conditioned. When a high temperature alert is triggered, ARM will call every facility without air-conditioning and review precautions (see Cordilleras, above).
- If high-risk heat continues beyond 48 hours, ARM will call the facilities without air-conditioning to ascertain how each specific client is doing. Any questionable situations will require immediate consultation with the ARM unit chief to determine what further steps need to be taken, up to and including making a visit to the facility.

### Clients Living in Residential Care in San Mateo County (ex. Board and Care Facilities)

- Behavioral Health Clinics have the primary responsibility to identify clients in Residential Care Homes, to determine which clients will be at particular risk when dangerous temperatures occur. ARM may be asked to assist in making phone calls and other steps to assure client safety.
- Each home will be called on a high-temperature alert day to review precautions that must be taken by the operator. These include the use of fans, availability of fluids and iced treats, clothing issues and other steps listed above.
- The location of nearby air-conditioned respite locations will be given to the residential care provider.
- If the BHRS staff member feels unsure about the level of the response in the residence, a visit to that residence must be scheduled within 24 hours.

### Clients in Independent Living (homes, apartments, hotels)

- Behavioral Health Clinics will review all open clients to identify those at special risk of heat-related incidents; this information will be added to names on the clinic emergency management plan; other clients will be added as identified.

- All at-risk clients will be called or visited within 24-32 hours of a heat emergency, and on an ongoing basis if the heat emergency continues. Case managers should be prepared to carry cold drinks with them to leave with clients.
- Case managers will prioritize (with unit chiefs and medical directors) the acuity of each living situation. When the heat emergency is prolonged over several days, it may be necessary to develop alternative temporary housing plans for clients who are at special risk such as clients who are very old or physically ill.

Clients in Agency Supported Shelters, Apartments, Group Homes

- Community Based Organizations will review the above protocol and develop similar protocols to assure the continued safety of clients during a heat emergency.

Additional Tips for Staff and Clients

*During a Heat Advisory in 2008, San Mateo County Public Health Officials offered the following tips for staying cool:*

- Drink plenty of water or other non-alcoholic fluids.
- Stay indoors in the coolest part of the house, especially between 12 noon and 6 p.m.
- A shady spot outdoors may be cooler than in the house, especially if there is a breeze.
- Schedule outside activities before noon or in the evening.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing
- Keep a container of cool water nearby and use wet washcloths to pat the wrists, face and back of neck
- Use small battery-operated hand-held fans and misters.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat when in the sun.
- Go to an air conditioned place - spend a few hours at the library, in a movie or at a mall or restaurant.

Approved: Signature on file  
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Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_