

SAN MATEO COUNTY  
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

DATE: September 15, 2005

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY NO.: MH 05-08

SUBJECT: Adverse Events, Reporting

AUTHORITY: San Mateo County Ordinance

SUPERSEDES: Prior unwritten procedures

### BACKGROUND & POLICY

San Mateo County Mental Health Services is committed to full disclosure of medical errors in order to encourage improvements to systems of care and to ensure appropriate management of high risk situations. In August 2005, the San Mateo Board of Supervisors adopted an ordinance requiring health care workers to report “adverse events” resulting from medical errors to the County Manager and the patient or his or her legal representative.

### PURPOSE

This policy defines “adverse events” as considered in the County ordinance and creates a procedure for their prompt reporting to county officials.

### DEFINITION

Adverse Events is defined in Ordinance No. 04272 as follows: “...an unintended situation that arises from an error in medical diagnosis, procedure, equipment, product, medication or other patient care that results in death or serious injury...” The Ordinance is attached to this policy by way of reference.

### PROCEDURE

- A. Reporting by Employees of San Mateo County Mental Health – any employee (including contractors providing services on the premises of San Mateo County Mental Health facilities) becoming aware of an adverse event must report this event immediately to their supervisor and a manager in their division. The supervisor and manager must report the event immediately to the Mental Health Director. If a manager is not available to receive this

- When employees hear of adverse events involving mental health clients in other County Departments (e.g., SMMC, Hillcrest, primary care clinic), the employee should report this event as described in this policy.
- B. Reporting by Mental Health Director – upon receiving a report of an adverse event, the MH Director or designee shall report the event by phone to the Health Director and to the County Manager within 24 hours. The MH Director or designee shall report the event to the patient or the patient’s legal representative.
- When the adverse event occurred on the premises of another County Department (e.g., SMMC, Hillcrest, primary care clinic), the MH Director will contact the County Manager and the Director of that Department.
- C. Investigation of the Adverse Event – upon receiving a report of an adverse event, the MH Director will identify the appropriate MH staff to conduct a full investigation of the event. Upon completion of the investigation, a summary will be provided in writing to the County Manager and to the patient or the patient’s legal representative. The summary must include steps to be taken by MH to minimize or prevent reoccurrence of a similar event in the future.
- When the adverse event occurred on the premises of another County Department, (e.g., SMMC, Hillcrest, primary care clinic), the investigation will be conducted by the Director of that Department.
- D. Client privacy rights – any disclosure of an adverse event to a family member or a legal representative must not include information that compromises the privacy rights of the patient, such as information about the patient’s diagnosis and history or course of treatment.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gale Bataille, Director  
 Mental Health Services Division

Attachment: San Mateo County Ordinance No. 04272

Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_  
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