

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER
POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

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Policy 106 – Elopement (Leaving Without Permission)

I. POLICY

It is the policy of Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center to ensure that the appropriate actions are taken and appropriate persons are notified in the event of an elopement of a consumer who has presented for voluntary treatment in any mental health or I/DD twenty-four hour facility or ADS program.

II. DISCUSSION

SHCMHC sets forth these guidelines to provide consistent response for consumers who leave program sites without consent and/or against medical advice.

III. DEFINITIONS

Elopement – Any occurrence when an incapacitated consumer is out of the care, custody, and protective oversight of provider’s staff during times the provider is responsible for providing care.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. In the event of an elopement, the following steps will be followed.

1. When it is determined a consumer is missing or not signed out, the program area will be searched after assuring other consumers are supervised. A foot search will be conducted within a one block radius.
2. Staff witnessing an elopement will note the time and general direction the consumer took.
3. A general search of the grounds is conducted to locate and encourage the consumer to return to the program site.
4. Staff will notify the program director of the elopement.
5. Law enforcement will be notified in consumer is out of the home for more than 15 minutes for any mental health or I/DD consumer.
6. Staff will search friends or community facilities/ areas the consumer may have went to.

7. While SHCMHC staff may use verbal efforts to encourage and persuade the eloped consumer to return to the program site, staff shall not be permitted to physically apprehend a consumer who has presented for voluntary treatment unless the consumer's personal health/safety are in imminent danger (e.g. walking in traffic)..
 8. Any imminent threat to a consumer's personal health/safety will take precedence over policy.
 9. If the consumer is injured, medical attention will be arranged immediately.
- B. If an eloped consumer is determined to represent a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of himself/herself, or to another person, and a less restrictive alternative cannot be determined, then the following steps shall be taken by SHCMHC staff.
1. The staff will initiate an application for involuntary hospitalization of the consumer in question.
 2. The staff will immediately notify any person or persons determined to be reasonably able to prevent or lessen the serious and imminent threat, including any or all of the following:
 - a. The individual target(s) of the threat;
 - b. The next of kin;
 - c. Law enforcement authorities; and
 - d. Other person(s) determined to be reasonably able to prevent or lessen the serious and imminent threat, including family members, significant others, and acquaintances.
 3. Only the following information may be disclosed to third parties under this policy about an eloped consumer who is determined to represent a serious and imminent threat.
 - a. The consumer's name, address, age, gender, weight, height, and other distinguishing physical characteristics, including race, hair, and eye color, presence or absence of facial hair, scars, tattoos, clothing; and
 - b. The nature of the serious and imminent threat, including known weapons, if any.

4. Except when an application for involuntary hospitalization is filed, or for treatment purposes, SHCMHC staff shall not disclose diagnostic and other treatment information to third parties regarding an eloped consumer.
5. Any person notified of the elopement under this section shall be encouraged to notify SHCMHC when the consumer has been located. If law enforcement authorities have already been notified of the elopement, then they too should be notified if the consumer has been located.

C. Returned Consumer

When an eloped consumer returns to the program site, a search for contraband will be conducted and a determination to continue services will be made according to each program's criteria.

D. Documentation

1. Documentation of all the above information is entered into the consumer record through a progress note.
2. In addition, staff must complete a detailed Adverse Incident Report and submit to the Chief Executive Officer or designee within twenty-four hours.
3. All phone contacts are documented with date, time of call, name of person(s) contacted and any pertinent information obtained.
4. Final disposition of the elopement is documented in the consumer's record. If discharges, a notation shall be placed in the record that he/she left against medical advice.

E. Due to the unique presenting problems of consumer served by CPST, Residential Substance Use (Legends, Waves, Inspires), twenty-four hour Residential, and ADS, the procedures listed above and the following program specific procedures will also apply.

RESIDENTIAL SUD

1. Any resident on an approved pass who does not return within thirty minutes of their return time, will be considered eloped as stated in the handbook.
2. In the event that an eloped consumer does not return to the program after one hour, the consumer will be discharged unless an emergency circumstance has occurred.

CPST

1. The program director and physician/physician assistant are notified of the elopement.
2. The consumer will be discharged as against medical advice.
3. If the consumer has been involuntarily committed to the unit, the police will be notified immediately. The Mental Hygiene Commissioner and on-call worker will be notified.
4. If the consumer is at risk for suicidal or homicidal ideations, an involuntarily committed will be completed for the safety of the consumer.
5. If the consumer is on a Voluntary Treatment Agreement (VTA) and elopes from the facility, SHCMHC will file for the VTA to be revoked.

Twenty-Four Hour Residential and ADS

1. Guardians/family members will be notified as soon as possible if the consumer is not found in a reasonable amount of time.
2. If the consumer has been out of the facility more than fifteen minutes, Law Enforcement will be notified to assist with search.
3. If consumer has guardianship through DHHR, the Centralized Intake Hotline (1-800-352-6513) will be notified of the consumer leaving the site.
4. Once the consumer is found and evaluated, the consumer's treatment team will determine the next appropriate course of action.

All elopements will be documented on a detailed Adverse Incident Report and submitted to the Chief Executive Officer or designee within 24 hours.