

# **SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL**

**Date of Issue: 11/30/10**

**Section Number 142**

**Date Revised: 12/14/15; 3/31/16, 1/10/22**

### **Policy 142 – Management of Voluntary Treatment Agreements or VTAs**

#### **I. POLICY**

It is the policy of Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center to serve all consumers in the least restrictive environment. Therefore, whenever appropriate, Southern Highlands will participate in a Voluntary Treatment Agreement or VTA, as a result of a mental hygiene petition.

#### **II. DISCUSSION**

In an effort to reduce involuntary commitments, decrease hospitalizations, and to maintain individuals in the least restrictive setting, Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center will track and follow-up with all individuals under Voluntary Treatment Agreements. We, along with the supportive family, will help these individuals with treatment compliance by providing Community Engagement staff to assist with transportation and to identify and resolve other barriers to treatment. By having a Community Engagement Specialist, it is our goal to help the individual stabilize more quickly and to be maintained longer within his or her community without the need for hospitalization or commitment. However, if an individual decompensates to the point of being at risk of harm to self or others or is non-compliant with the VTA, the Community Engagement Specialist will take immediate action to pursue higher level of care for the individual in need.

#### **III. PROCEDURES**

- A. Evaluators will complete the VTA form to be attached to the VTA order specifying the details of the treatment agreement (see Attachment A). These treatment recommendations will be explained thoroughly to the consumer and a copy will be provided. Prior to developing a VTA for the Crisis Stabilization Unit, the on-call staff must contact the unit and determine if there is a bed available and the consumer is appropriate for admission.
- B. Crisis staff will notify the consumer they must present to the center within 24 hours of the date the VTA is ordered/or the next business day to meet with the Liaison/Community Engagement Specialist. The Liaison/Community Engagement Specialist will explain Community Engagement services to the consumer and will get a contract for Community Engagement services signed

by the consumer and obtain any needed consents signed for family members/agencies to assist in the compliance of the VTA. Also, contact telephone numbers and physical address will be obtained and an alert will be added to the electronic health record. If a consumer refuses Community Engagement services, the contract will indicate the refusal of services. The Liaison/Community Engagement Specialist will notify the Director of CES/ Crisis Services and relevant parties of the mental hygiene process will be notified within 24 hours so the VTA can be modified.

- C. Crisis staff in all three counties are to report by the next working day all newly assigned VTAs to the Liaison and the Community Engagement Supervisor who will in turn immediately assign a Community Engagement Specialist. A copy of the legal documentation, including the Application, Detention Order, Certification, Recommendations for the VTA, VTA Order, and Probable Cause Order will be provided for the Liaison and the Community Engagement Staff Supervisor.
- D. The Liaison/Community Engagement Specialist, once assigned, should immediately start working with the consumer under the VTA ensuring that the initial follow-up appointment is made such as an initial intake, medication management appointment, counseling appointment, etc. The assigned Liaison/Community Engagement Specialist will provide or arrange for transportation as necessary and will identify and resolve any potential barriers to treatment compliance including consumer behavior.
- E. If a Community Engagement Specialist is unable to make contact with a consumer under a VTA within 24 hours of the VTA being issued, the Community Engagement Specialist will attempt a home visit with 48 hours of the VTA being issued. If contact is not made by home visit or returned phone call within 72 hours of the initial date of the VTA, the Liaison/Community Engagement Specialist will file a motion to revoke the VTA. If at anytime during the duration of the VTA, the Community Engagement Specialist and Law Enforcement have made a reasonable number of attempts to contact an individual who is considered non compliant and have been unable to locate/communicate with the consumer, Community Engagement Specialist with the approval from the Chief Clinical Officer and/ or CEO may file an affidavit with the Mental Hygiene Commissioner requesting the VTA be terminated.
- F. The consumer is allowed three missed appointment/rescheduled appointments. After the missed/cancelled appointments, the Liaison/Community Engagement Specialist will attempt to make contact with the individual by phone/home visit within 24 hours of the missed/cancelled appointment and another appointment

will be scheduled as soon as possible. If the Liaison/Community Engagement Specialist is unable to make contact by phone/home visit/or returned phone call within 48 hours, a certified letter will be sent to the consumer to contact the office. If the consumer does not respond within five (5) days of the letter being sent, the Liaison/Community Engagement Specialist will file a motion to revoke the VTA. If the motion is dismissed, previously missed/rescheduled appointments will be forgiven and the consumer will be allowed three missed/rescheduled appointments before being considered non compliant. The Liaison, Community Engagement Specialist and Director of CES/ Crisis Services will meet weekly to review community engagement activity notes and monthly VTA reporting form to ensure compliance and that revocation orders are filed as necessary.

- G. During the duration of the VTA, the consumer will be scheduled to see the medical provider at least once per month for follow up psychiatric services.
- H. VTAs will be tracked for a period of six (6) months or longer depending on the order by the Liaison/ designee and a monthly tracking form will be completed.
- I. Consumers who are under a Voluntary Treatment Agreement may prefer services with an agency or entity outside of Southern Highlands. The consumer will be assigned a Liaison/Community Engagement Specialist. The Liaison will ensure that the outside agency/entity is aware of the VTA and will monitor compliance.
- J. A monthly report of VTA compliance will be forwarded to the medical providers at SHCMHC, Director of the CSU, Chief Mental Hygiene Commissioner, Director of CES/ Crisis Services, Chief Clinical Officer and CEO for review.
- K. VTAs in Mercer, McDowell, and Wyoming Counties should all follow this policy and procedure. If any reason this cannot be followed the Clinical Director and/or CEO must be notified.