

OFFICE OF PATIENTS' RIGHTS

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MEMORANDUM

TO: All Interested Persons

FROM: California Office of Patients' Rights

RE: Pain Assessment Requirements

DATE: April 19, 2000

Effective January 1st, 2000 Assembly Bill 791 became effective. It adds Section 1254.7 to the Health and Safety Code. HSC 1254.7 reads:

- (a) It is the intent of the legislature that pain be assessed and treated promptly, effectively, and for as long as the pain persists.
- (b) Every health facility licensed pursuant to this chapter shall, as a condition of licensure, include pain as an item to be assessed at the same time vital signs are taken. The health facility shall ensure that pain assessment is performed in a consistent manner that is appropriate to the patient. The pain assessment shall be noted in the patients' chart in a manner consistent with other vital signs.

This legislative mandate is consistent with state and federal concerns regarding appropriate pain management for all persons. The Veterans administration has adopted similar policies, referring to pain as the fifth vital sign.

JCAHO has also adopted new standards requiring monitoring of pain as reported by patients. All facilities that are accredited by JCAHO are adopting these new standards. This may include a number of facilities in your county that are currently providing psychiatric services.

Enclosed is a copy of the adopted legislation as well as guidelines on the adoption of the new JCAHO standards. These guidelines also identify the new standards as required under JCAHO accreditation.

Please review this information, as it may have some impact on the clients that you currently provide service to.

1254.7. Pain Assessment

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(b) Every health facility licensed pursuant to this chapter shall, as a condition of licensure, include pain as an item to be assessed at the same time as vital signs are taken. The health facility shall ensure that pain assessment is performed in a consistent manner that is appropriate to the patient. The pain assessment shall be noted in the patient's chart in a manner consistent with other vital signs.