

Katrina Hotrum
Deputy SecretaryDuffy Rodriguez
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Chief Medical Officer

TO: New Mexico Provider Agencies

FR: Katrina Hotrum, Deputy Secretary

KH

DATE: July 31, 2008

RE: **New Mexico Department of Health - Aspiration Clinical Team Initiative**

I am pleased to announce that the Department of Health, in conjunction with the Continuum of Care Project, is launching an initiative in the area of aspiration prevention. The intent of this initiative is assessment and prevention, as opposed to taking a punitive approach, by assisting provider agencies in recognizing and managing aspiration risk. Initially, resources will be focused on assessment and prevention for Jackson Class Members, and in the future will be extended to other at-risk consumers receiving services under the Developmental Disability Waiver. The Department of Health is excited to be using its resources to address this issue in New Mexico.

This initiative has several elements: (1) the creation of an Aspiration Clinical Team to conduct assessments; (2) the development of an assessment tool to be used by the Aspiration Clinical Team; (3) recommendations to each Interdisciplinary Team regarding ways to enhance aspiration management for these individuals (4) analyze and make recommendation for systemic improvements based on data gathered during the assessments; and, (5) ensure overall well-being of our Jackson class members and other consumers.

Aspiration Clinical Team Objectives:

1. Assess and prioritize those Jackson Class Members already identified with aspiration risk factors.
 - a. Recognize and maintain current, established good practice for aspiration risk management
 - b. Determine adequacy of supports; Provide technical assistance to the Interdisciplinary team to resolve any identified concerns.
2. Screen remaining Jackson class members for potential risk of aspiration.
 - a. If identified as a potential risk for aspiration an assessment will occur just as described in #1 above.
3. Conduct screenings and assessments of non-class members, using the established prioritization criteria.

The Aspiration Clinical Teams will be comprised of professionals with specialized knowledge in aspiration issues and risk. Each team will include; a Physician, a Registered Nurse, a Speech-Language Pathologist, and administrative support.

In the near future, you will be contacted by the Continuum of Care staff to schedule these assessments and I ask that all providers make every effort to accommodate the Aspiration Clinical Team's schedule and records request. Because the Continuum of Care Project is under contract with the Department of Health to provide clinical consultation to these individuals, a HIPAA release is not needed. We will need an agency nurse and a direct care staff member that typically feeds the individual available during the assessments. If the individual has a Speech Language Pathologist on the team, also see that they are notified as to the time and place of the assessment so they can attend if possible. Finally, please be prepared to supply copies of the following documents to the Aspiration Clinical Team when they arrive:

- Healthcare Plan for both Residential and Day
- Mealtime Plan and/or G-tube protocol for both Residential and Day
- Crisis Prevention Intervention Plan for Aspiration for both Residential and Day

(List of documents continued on page 2)

- Current Individual Service Plan
- “Face sheet” or other document that lists all the individual’s diagnoses
- Copies of any Swallow Studies and/or SAFE reports
- Nutrition/Dietician Assessment and most recent quarterly report
- Positioning Protocol for both Residential and Day
- Oral Hygiene Protocol
- Weight Records for past year
- Current MAR from both Residential and Day

Case Managers should ask providers if Continuum of Care has yet contacted the provider for Jackson class members on their caseload who are on the Statewide Aspiration Risk List when they do their monthly site visits and make note of that on the form. Case managers should also assist in the provision of the above documents and/or notifying the Speech Language Pathologist if needed.

If you have questions, feedback or ideas for improvement please send them to me and the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division via santiago.sandoval@state.nm.us. Thank you for this opportunity to better serve our consumers and we look forward to working with you on this initiative.