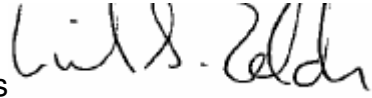


**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
Office of Mental Health and
Substance Abuse Services**

TO: HealthChoices Behavioral Health Contractors

FROM: Linda S. Zelch, Director of Western Operations
Bureau of Community and Hospital Operations



DATE: March 7, 2008

SUBJECT: Credentialing Behavior Specialist Consultants Trained to Do
Functional Behavioral Assessments

This memo is to notify you of a new program requirement that the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) intends to implement July 1, 2008. This program change is being made to set standards for and improve the quality of assessments for children with behavioral health needs compounded by developmental disorders, such as autistic disorder and other pervasive developmental disorders. OMHSAS will require HealthChoices Behavioral Health contractors to begin credentialing Behavior Specialist Consultants (BSC) who have completed training in Functional Behavioral Assessment. As part of the overall training initiative of the Bureau of Autism Services, more than 800 Behavior Specialist Consultants have already completed the two-day training in Functional Behavioral Assessment that is used to develop individualized treatment/behavioral plans. Additional training will continue to be offered with the expectation that by January 1, 2009, all Behavior Specialist Consultants who serve children with Autism Spectrum Disorder will have completed the training.

In addition, training will be offered for the TSS workers and other staff who will be implementing these individualized behavioral plans. The process for credentialing these staff will be announced at a later date.

The Behavior Specialist Consultants who complete the Bureau of Autism Services training utilize the Functional Behavioral Assessment at the beginning of the treatment planning process and continue to monitor the child throughout that process. The initial Functional Behavioral Assessment will take an average of 12 to 15 hours over a 4 to 6 week period, but could take more depending on the complexity of the situation. The number of BSC hours after that initial assessment should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the child. Likewise, the number of TSS, or other staff hours should be tailored to the needs of the child, as identified through the Functional Behavioral Assessment. See attached draft bulletin for additional details about the Functional Behavioral Assessment.

HealthChoices Behavioral Health Contractors -2-

In order to qualify for credentialing a Behavior Specialist Consultant, you must complete the Functional Behavioral Assessment training provided by the Bureau of Autism Services, or complete one of the Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) credential programs offered by a university. Currently the universities offering this credential are: University of Pittsburgh, Temple University, Lehigh University before 2006, Saint Joseph's University, Mercyhurst College, East Stroudsburg University, and Penn State University.

Effective July 1, 2008, HealthChoices Behavioral Health contractors are to begin the process of credentialing individuals who have successfully completed the approved Functional Behavioral Assessment training so that by January 2009 there will be a network of certified staff. OMHSAS will monitor the implementation of this new requirement to ensure members have a choice of providers and to ensure there is adequate capacity of qualified providers to serve members.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please submit them in writing to Rachelle Buchenauer, via email at rbuchenaue@state.pa.us by March 24, 2008.

Enclosure