

Chief Psychiatrist Practice Guidelines

Temporary Absences

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Overview

- These Practice Guidelines:
 - set out procedures for authorised mental health services (AMHS) regarding temporary absences for particular patients under the Mental Health Act 2016 (MHA 2016)
 - are to be read in conjunction with the relevant provisions of the MHA 2016 (Chapter 7, Part 7, and Chapter 11, Part 6, Divisions 5 and 6), and
 - are mandatory for all AMHS staff exercising a power or function under the MHA 2016.

Key information

- The Chief Psychiatrist may approve particular patients who are detained in an inpatient unit of an AMHS to be temporarily absent under prescribed circumstances.
- A temporary absence may be approved to enable access to health care, to attend a court or judicial hearing, to seek accommodation as part of discharge planning or for compassionate grounds.

Definitions

Authorised person – includes a health practitioner, an ambulance officer, a police officer, the Administrator of an AMHS, and a health service employee appointed by the Administrator¹.

Temporary absence – means a brief period during which a patient is authorised to be absent from an AMHS for a specific purpose.

Guidelines

1 Authorisation of temporary absences

1.1 Patients who may require a temporary absence approval

- Particular patients who are detained in an inpatient unit of an AMHS may require approval to be temporarily absent for a specific purpose. Particular patients are:
 - patients subject to a Forensic Order (inpatient category) who do not have the required limited community treatment authorised or ordered
 - classified patients, and
 - patients subject to a Judicial Order.

¹ The Administrator may appoint a specific health service employee, or a class of health service employees (for example all consumer consultants employed in the AMHS) as authorised persons.

1.2 Reasons a temporary absence may be required

- The Chief Psychiatrist may approve a temporary absent for the following reasons:
 - for the patient to see a doctor, dentist, or other health care provider
 - for the patient to be able to go to court, tribunal or other judicial body if needed
 - for the patient to look for accommodation as part of discharge planning
 - on compassionate grounds, for example if the client has a funeral to attend, and
 - for any other purpose the Chief Psychiatrist is satisfied justifies the need for the temporary absence.

1.3 Approval of temporary absence

- Only the Chief Psychiatrist can approve a patient's temporary absence from an AMHS.
- An authorised doctor must request written approval from the Chief Psychiatrist by completing the **Chief Psychiatrist Approval – Temporary Absences and Limited Community Treatment for Particular Patients** form. This form is to be completed electronically or, if this is not practicable, completed in hard copy and uploaded to CIMHA.
- The request must include:
 - the reasons the temporary absence is being sought
 - the proposed start and end dates and times
 - details of the proposed absence (e.g. the nature and location of health care to be provided), and
 - any conditions for the proposed absence (e.g. that the person is to be escorted or accompanied throughout the absence).
- The Chief Psychiatrist will, as soon as practicable, make a determination on the request, and provide the outcome to the Administrator and the authorised doctor on the **Chief Psychiatrist Approval – Temporary Absences and Limited Community Treatment for Particular Patients** form.
- The temporary absence must be recorded as a clinical note on the patient's file in CIMHA.

2 Return after temporary absence

- A temporary absence ends at the end of the approved period stated in the **Chief Psychiatrist Approval – Temporary Absences and Limited Community Treatment for Particular Patients** form or when the patient returns to the AMHS.
- If the patient does not return within the approved period, an authorised person can transport the patient back to the service. The *Chief Psychiatrist Practice Guidelines – Transfers and Transport* outlines the powers of an authorised person for transporting a patient who has not returned as required from a temporary absence.

Glossary of Terms

AMHS	Authorised Mental Health Service
CIMHA	Consumer Integrated Mental Health Application
MHA 2016	<i>Mental Health Act 2016</i>

Referenced Forms, Clinical Notes and Templates

[Chief Psychiatrist Approval – Temporary Absences and Limited Community Treatment for Particular Patients form](#)

Referenced Documents & Sources

[Chief Psychiatrist Guidelines – Involuntary Patient Absences](#)

[Chief Psychiatrist Practice Guidelines – Transfers and Transport](#)

[Mental Health Act 2016](#)

Document Status Summary

Date of Chief Psychiatrist approval:	7 February 2017
Date of effect:	5 March 2017
Supersedes version that took effect on:	N/A
To be reviewed by:	5 March 2020