

Bulletin ID: No. 27 - Providing Mental Health Rehabilitation Services Prior to Completion of a Diagnostic Assessment

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) wants to ensure that consumers seeking mental health treatment are able to access services and treatment in a timely manner. Interpretation of the department's Diagnostic and Assessment (D&A) requirement has presented a barrier to prompt treatment.

In many cases, it is clinically appropriate to reach a working diagnosis and start treatment, including medications, without the comprehensive three-hour Diagnostic and Assessment. It is best for a consumer to have prompt access to services and start treatment immediately, including being able to see the psychiatrist and have, if needed, medication prescribed without delay. It is not appropriate to delay treatment to complete a three-hour D&A.

If a full D&A is needed, the data for the D&A may be collected over the next sessions, while treatment is monitored. In other situations, all the elements of the D&A may not be collected and therefore a full D&A is not needed. This is a clinical judgment.

How to bill: Do not bill for a D&A if a D&A is not completed. Billing should be authorized for the service rendered.

If you have any questions, please contact Venida Hamilton at (202) 617-3155 or at venida.hamilton@dc.gov.