

 <p style="text-align: center;">County of Sacramento Department of Health Services Division of Behavioral Health Services Policy and Procedure</p>	Policy Issuer (Unit/Program)	QM
	Policy Number	QM-10-29
	Effective Date	07-01-2014
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Title: Mental Status Exam	Functional Area: Chart Review – Non-Hospital Services	
Approved By: (Signature on File) Signed version available upon request		
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BACKGROUND/CONTEXT:

The Mental Status Exam (MSE) is a fundamental evaluation tool used by Sacramento County Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Mental Health Plan (MHP) providers in the Avatar Clinical Workstation (CWS). The MSE is a dynamic tool that augments other assessment components, helps with identification of crisis situations, provides clinical information critical to completion of a clinical formulation and to assignment of a clinical diagnosis, and the MSE is also a required component in Domain One of the CalAIM Assessment.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to outline guidelines, requirements, and timelines for development and finalization of the Mental Status Exam.

DEFINITIONS:

Mental Status Exam: is a structured method to describe a patient’s current state of mind under domains of appearance, attitude, behavior, mood and affect, speech, thought process, thought content, perception, cognition, insight and judgment. The information obtained from the MSE and other evaluation tools helps to determine medical necessity for initial and continued care requests. All assessment information, including the MSE, informs treatment.

Clinical Bundle: The required documentation to be completed by the assigned provider including Assessment Documents and Client Plan. Refer to QM Documentation Training: CWS Documentation Bundles and your contract for the specific required documentation.

DETAILS:

It is the policy of Sacramento County MHP to complete a MSE for all clients.

1. The MSE is required to be completed in conjunction with the initial Core Assessment and when clinically indicated. The MSE must be completed and linked to the initial Core Assessment in order to finalize the Core Assessment.
2. The MSE is a component of a complete Clinical Bundle.
3. The MSE follows the same paperwork cycle completion requirements as the other assessments in the initial Clinical Bundle. The time period for providers to complete an initial MSE is up to clinical discretion; however, providers shall complete MSE within a reasonable time and in accordance

with generally accepted standards of practice. Sacramento County considers it best practice to complete the Clinical Bundle within 90 days, unless there is documentation of any issues (i.e., acuity, homelessness, difficulty with engagement) that prove to be a barrier to completion. MSE not completed during these timelines will not result in recoupments.

4. Information collected for the MSE requires observation of the client and must be obtained during a face-to-face interview unless extenuating circumstances are documented.
5. The MSE must be completed and finalized by staff qualified to do so as identified in the Avatar CWS Documentation Matrix. The MSE is completed by licensed or licensed waived staff. A staff that is not licensed or licensed waived may contribute to the MSE by documenting their observations. This would be done in collaboration with, direction by, and oversight of the LPHA who is be responsible for the completion and co-signing of the MSE.
6. Information collected for the MSE must be considered within a cross-cultural context to assign an accurate diagnosis. For example, norms for appearance and display of emotions may differ across cultures and distinctions between culturally normative spiritual and religious beliefs must be recognized distinct from delusions and hallucinations.
7. The MSE, in conjunction with other assessment tools, is used to inform decisions about treatment strategy and choice of treatment setting.
8. The MSE may be included with a Core Assessment Report format, when a printed “hardcopy” form of the document is needed.

Procedure:

The MSE elements and requirements are explained below:

1. The two MSE versions, Adult and Child, are driven by selection of the client’s age range on the Core Assessment. As an example, if selecting ages 16-24 (Adult), 25-59 or 60+ age range would complete the Adult MSE; while ages 0-5, 6-15 or 16-24 (Child) would select the Child MSE.
2. As standard practice for AVATAR CWS, items in red are required in order to save to draft and to finalize. MSE items should be completed within scope of practice and based on clinical presentation.
3. Information needed to complete the MSE is obtained through a combination of observation and focused questions.
4. The Adult and Child MSE follow a structured format with standard domains completed using multi-selects tables. The domains may also include subdivisions, also completed using multi-select tables. Each domain includes a comments field to record additional information as free-form text.
5. The MSE is considered complete when selections have been made for all tables. There should be no blanks.
6. Additional information about MSE may be used to inform need for additional assessment, psychological testing, etc.
7. For Avatar CWS, a Core Assessment cannot be finalized and submitted until a completed MSE is linked.

REFERENCE(S)/ATTACHMENTS:

- The Mental Health Plan Contract
- 9 CCR § 1810.204 Assessment
- [MHSUDS IN# 17-040](#)
- [BHIN 22-019 \(ca.gov\)](#)

RELATED POLICIES:

- QM 10-26 Core Assessment
- QM 10-25 Health Questionnaire
- QM 10-27 Client Plan

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