

HIV Health Services Planning Council Sacramento TGA Policy and Procedure Manual

Subject: HIV Psychosocial Support Group Service Standard **No.:** SSC 17

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Consistent with funded Service Priorities established by the Sacramento TGA HIV Health Services Council the following HIV Psychosocial Support Group Service Standard will apply to all Ryan White contracted service providers that conduct psychosocial support group services.

Service Objective

The objective of Psychosocial Support Services is to increase client self-efficacy and create a broad-based support system that makes resources available as needed.

HRSA Service Definition

Psychosocial Support Services provide group or individual support and counseling services to assist eligible people living with HIV to address behavioral and physical health concerns.

Program Guidance

Ryan White-funded pastoral counseling must be available to all eligible clients regardless of their religious denominational affiliation.

Funds under this service category may not be used to pay for nutritional supplements (See Food Bank/Home Delivered Meals service category), social/recreational activities, or gym memberships.

Funds under this service category may not be used to pay for services provided by a licensed mental health provider (see Mental Health Services service category.)

Key Activities

Key activities of Psychosocial Support Services may include:

- HIV support groups

- Nutrition counseling provided by a non-registered dietitian (see Medical Nutrition Therapy Services for services provided by Registered Dietitians)
- Child abuse and neglect counseling
- Pastoral care/counseling services
- Bereavement counseling

Psychosocial Support Services can be provided in individual and/or group settings.

1. Ryan White funding is to be used for HIV/AIDS medical care including, psychosocial and support services designed to significantly improve client access and adherence to such resources. Any HIV Psychosocial Support Group services that are provided by agencies and paid for through Ryan White funding will be part of a comprehensive medical care plan that promotes the optimal state of health for the afflicted individual and shall be related to healthcare or other critical needs.
2. Ryan White funding is to be expended in a cost effective, equitable manner based upon client need verification. Therefore, clients may present to Psychosocial Support Groups through self-referral or agency referral. Admittance to Psychosocial Support Groups is at the discretion of the support group facilitator and shall be based upon the facilitator's assessment of the presenting client and the clients' compatibility with the existing group. Payment for HIV Psychosocial Support Group services through Ryan White funding are authorized only in circumstances where client eligibility is validated and no other payment guarantor has been identified.
3. In accordance with the above:

Psychosocial Support Services must be offered in a way that addresses barriers to accessing health care and uses resources to support positive health outcomes for clients. When relevant, these services should be coordinated with a client's overarching Care Plan. All Psychosocial Support Services must include at least one of the Key Activities included in the Service Definition section of this document. Other key characteristics include:

Eligibility Screening: If the Psychosocial Support Services provider is the client's first contact with Ryan White-funded services, the client must be screened for eligibility as described in the Universal Standards of Care.

Initial Psychosocial Support Services Appointments: Initial Psychosocial Support Services appointments should be made as soon as

possible to avoid potential drop out. Appointments must occur no later than 30 calendar days of first client referral, but should be scheduled sooner whenever possible. As clients may miss appointments, agencies must have a process in place to ensure timely follow up with clients, preferably within 24 hours. Missed appointments and attempts at rescheduling must be documented in the file.

Each new client enrolled in Psychosocial Support Services must receive an orientation to the services at the first visit; document this orientation in the client file.

Treatment Provision

Requirements: Treatment plans are recommended for high-acuity clients, although they are not generally required for this service category. Psychosocial Support Services providers developing an individualized treatment plan should ensure that the plan, at a minimum:

- Reviews and incorporates the existing Care Plan, if any
- Identifies the client's needs, personal support systems, and services they are currently receiving
- Includes individual and/or group counseling sessions
- Provides education and information that will enhance the client's well-being, including health education, risk reduction, drug/medication use, and nutritional information
- Provides allowable, needed services to family members and significant others with the goal of developing and strengthening the client's support system
- Coordinates with the client's existing providers, such as mental health and substance use case managers
- Coordinates and makes referrals to outside providers as needed
- Is signed and dated by the provider unless documented via the Care Plan in the client's file or electronic health record

Documentation: Psychosocial Support Services should be provided in a way that is consistent with the individual service plan. All services provided should be documented in the client's chart.

In accordance with above:

- Psychosocial Support Group services shall be led by an individual with documented experience and/or training in group dynamics and group facilitation. The leader must have knowledge and experience with HIV issues.

- Clients needing Psychosocial Support Group services should be placed in the support group most compatible with their life situations and/or experiences living with HIV.
- Ground rules and the groups' purpose shall be established and periodically evaluated for all support groups funded by Ryan White funds. The ground rules will be used to minimize interruption in productive group discussion. Ground rules will be reiterated prior to beginning each session.
- With the exception of the facilitator and guest presenters, participation in support groups shall be limited to individuals living with HIV (PLWH), as non-PLWH may intrude on trust and open discussion. Providers conducting Psychosocial Support Group services should have the ability to work with families of PLWH in a separate setting.
- Psychosocial Support Groups will be maintained at the size most conducive to productive sharing, listening, and discussion by all members.

4. Ryan White (RW) contracted service providers that conduct HIV Psychosocial Support Group Services shall develop and adhere to budgets for HIV support groups which reflect the principles referred to above. In addition, if available funding levels are anticipated to be less than the total need, agencies shall ensure that funds are distributed among the maximum possible number of clients who rely on RW funded HIV support group services for critical needs. Providers shall assure that no client receives any RW funded services unless such client is found to be eligible for services under such Eligibility Standards as may be adopted by the Planning Council.

Provider Qualifications

Education/Experience/Supervision

Psychosocial Support Services practitioners are not required to be licensed or registered in the State of California. Providers should be trained and knowledgeable in HIV-related issues. Individual supervision and guidance must be available to all staff as needed.

Exception: Pastoral care/counseling services must be provided by an institutional pastoral care program (e.g., components of AIDS interfaith networks, separately incorporated pastoral care and counseling centers, or as a component of services provided by a licensed provider, such as a home care or hospice provider).

Staff Orientation and Training

Initial: All Ryan White-funded staff providing Psychosocial Support Services must complete an initial training session related to their job description and

serving those with HIV. Training should be completed within 60 days of hire. Topics must include:

- General HIV knowledge such as transmission, care, and prevention
- Privacy requirements and HIPAA regulations
- Navigation of the local system of HIV care

Ongoing: Staff must also receive ongoing annual training as appropriate for their position. Training must be clearly documented and tracked for monitoring purposes.

5. Medical Case Managers at RW contracted service providers may at any time submit to the RW Recipient requests for interpretation of these or any other service standards adopted by the HIV Health Services Planning Council, based on the unique medical needs of a client or on unique barriers to accessing medical care which may be experienced by a client.

6. RW contracted service providers shall provide a means by which Medical Case Managers can obtain in-service training and advice related to interpreting client medical needs.

7. Clients shall have the right to request a review of any service denials under this or any other Services Standards adopted by the HIV Health Services Planning Council. The most recent review / grievance policies and procedures for the RW contracted service provider shall be made available to each client upon intake.

Adopted: 
Richard Benavidez, Chair

Dated: 06/22/22