

LICENSING ALERT



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Deputy Secretary for Quality Assurance
and Health Planning

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Division of Drug and Alcohol Program Licensing
Licensing Alert 1-96

Physical Examinations

In response to recent inquiries from drug and alcohol facilities, this Alert will clarify the Department's licensing requirements regarding physical examinations in inpatient treatment settings.

Physical examinations are required on all admissions to inpatient treatment facilities as outlined in 28 PA Code §709.51(b)(5) and §711.51(b)(5). Although the regulation does not provide a specific timeline for completion of this examination, the regulation requires that "intake procedures shall contain documentation of ... a physical examination." As the section itself is entitled "Intake and Admission", it is logical to conclude that there is a time limitation on obtaining physical examinations for prospective clients.

The Department interprets its regulation to require a physical examination within a time period which would reasonably both safeguard the client population of the facility as well as permit any needed medical treatment of the new client to begin and be effective.

The Department recommends, therefore, that facilities have the examinations completed within 48 hours of admission. In any case, the Department will require that each new client be given a physical examination no later than seven days following admission.

Physical examinations may be obtained prior to admission. If a client is referred from a service provider who, at the time of admission, is able to provide a copy of a physical examination completed within the prior 12 months, obtaining a new examination is at the discretion of the facility physician. If a copy of the prior physical examination is not provided at the time of admission or if the content does not include the requirements of §709.51(b)(5) or §711.51(b)(5), it is necessary to obtain a new physical examination within the prescribed timeframe.

Should you have questions regarding this Alert, you may contact Carol Bashore or Arvida Wanner at (717) 783-8675.