

LICENSING ALERT

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Deputy Secretary for Quality
Assurance and Health Planning

DIVISION OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROGRAM LICENSING

LICENSING ALERT 2-94

Group Counseling

With the increased emphasis on group counseling services for drug and alcohol clients, the Division of Drug and Alcohol Program Licensing has received numerous inquiries related to proper documentation of group counseling in the client record. This alert is in response to those inquiries.

All counseling services must be documented in client charts via progress notes as required by 28 Pa. Code Chapters 709 and 711. The current guidelines to the standards address group sessions briefly, stating:

"If group sessions are conducted, individual notes need not be written for each client. One group note will suffice provided that it includes a comment relative to each individual's response or participation in the group session."

To further elaborate, a group note may include the first name of each participant but not the last name or other identifier in order to protect the confidentiality of the clients.

Group sessions may be summarized at the end of a week in one note only if the same counselor is conducting all of the sessions and there is one common theme for the group i.e., women's issues, anger management, incest survivors issues.

When group therapy is the primary modality of treatment and little or no individual counseling is provided, group notes, by necessity, need to be more detailed. Facilities may wish to include elements of data, assessment and planning in each group note summary to ensure that specific goals and objectives of a client's treatment plan are addressed.

Individual counseling sessions may not be summarized weekly or otherwise.

If you have any questions, please contact Carol Bashore or Arvida Wanner at (717) 783-8675.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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