

## Modifications to Mental Health Center Certification Requirements

The commissioner of Human Services has temporarily modified certain requirements for certified mental health centers, whose services have been designated as essential during the peacetime emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The modifications are necessary to provide flexibility to providers, mitigate the spread of the virus, and protect the health and safety of clients and staff. These modifications are in addition to those for [All Licensed and Certified Services](#) issued on March 20, 2020, and revised on May 4, 2020, that modified licensing and certification activities to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and in recognition of the challenges of operating in full compliance with all applicable rules and standards during a pandemic.

These additional modifications apply to requirements for treatment delivery, documentation, and personnel and impose a new requirement to be familiar with and follow the guidelines on COVID-19 from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) specific to nonresidential settings. The changes to requirements for treatment delivery, documentation, and personnel are effective retroactively from March 13, 2020, until the conclusion of the peacetime emergency.

By making these modifications to certification standards and practices, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is providing mental health centers with more flexibility to operate in a pandemic and to be able to focus on the most critical health and safety measures needed during this time. Any departures from rule that a program implements from the list below must be documented in the program's emergency plan.

After the peacetime emergency ends, DHS will provide additional information regarding when programs will need to complete the peer reviews that were temporarily suspended.

The modifications of requirements for certified programs are as follows.

### New requirement for programs operating during the peacetime emergency

During the peacetime emergency, certification holders are required to be familiar with the [MDH guidance](#) and [CDC guidance](#) on COVID-19. If a person receiving services or a staff person tests positive for COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19, the certification holder must follow the MDH and CDC guidance specific to the situation and program capabilities. As the guidance will evolve during the pandemic, certification holders need to remain familiar with the guidance as it changes.

### Treatment Delivery

1. A mental health professional is not required to be onsite at each satellite location if:
  - the center has other methods for a mental health professional to supervise the services provided at each location, such as telephone or video; and

- the mental health professional documents that, in their professional judgment, services can be safely and effectively provided with this type of supervision.
2. Case consultation meetings are not required to occur twice a month if the center has and follows an alternative process for consultation that must include a meeting once a month.
  3. A mental health professional may provide the required client-specific supervisory contact to a mental health practitioner via telephone or video communication instead of face-to-face.

## Documentation

4. Requirements for multidisciplinary peer reviews of the annual caseload of each mental health professional scheduled during the peacetime emergency are temporarily suspended.

## Personnel

5. Requirements for multidisciplinary staff ratios and amounts of hours of mental health professionals are temporarily suspended.

## Additional information

In addition to the links above, you may find it helpful to review the following links for more COVID-19 information and resources.

[MDH Interim Guidance for the Prevention of COVID-19 in DHS-Licensed Residential and Non-Residential Settings with At-Risk Persons](#)

[DHS Licensing COVID-19 latest information](#)

[All DHS COVID-19 waivers and modifications](#)

[MDH community settings and COVID-19](#)

[Minnesota Health Care Programs Provider Manual telemedicine and COVID-19](#)

[Background studies COVID-19 temporary changes](#)

## Questions, technical assistance and variances

For questions, concerns, technical assistance, or to request a program specific [variance](#) to a requirement not addressed by these modifications, please contact the Behavioral Health and Children's Residential Facility Licensing Unit at [dhs.mhcdlicensing@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.mhcdlicensing@state.mn.us).