



CHAIRMAN'S MEMORANDUM

NO. 16-2005 OCTOBER 5, 2005

**TO: SHERIFFS, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS, COMMISSIONERS OF CORRECTION,
TRAINING COORDINATORS**

RE: MENTAL HEALTH FORM

Those involved in corrections know that a large percentage of inmates arrive at correctional facilities with mental health issues ranging from depression to schizophrenia to having suicidal thoughts. An inmate, just as people in the general public, can have mental illness and not be suicidal, or can be suicidal with no other mental health illness, or they can be both mentally ill and suicidal. In order to identify these inmates, facilities must heed 9 NYCRR §7013.17 **Initial screening and risk management**. This section states in part:

(a) Each inmate, upon admission to a facility, shall undergo an initial screening and risk assessment which shall consist of a screening interview, visual assessment and review of commitment documents. Such screening and risk assessment shall occur immediately upon an inmate's admission.

(b) A screening instrument(s) shall be utilized to elicit and record information on each inmate relating to the following:

- (1) history of mental illness or treatment
- (2) potential for self-injury or suicide

Since the 1980's the Commission has held that the only instrument that is in compliance with §7013.7(b)(5) is the Suicide Screening Form, which was a joint project of the Commission and the New York State Office of Mental Health. **This continues to be the case.**

However, each facility was allowed to provide its own method of determining an inmate's history of mental illness or treatment as required in §7013.7(b)(4). The purpose of this memorandum is to make you aware of an instrument that has been designed and tested by mental health professionals, to quickly identify those who may need mental health services. The National Institute of Corrections announced a statistically significant, yet simple form, which can be utilized by facilities to show compliance with §7013.7(b)(4). The announcement states, in part, that the GAINS EBP Center of Latham, NY, with funding from the National Institute of Justice, "has developed a new mental health screening tool for jails called the Brief Mental Health Screen (BJMHS). It is a tool for booking officers to screen incoming detainees for the need for further mental health assessment.

The screening instrument was validated in a study conducted in four jails, two in Maryland and two in New York. The study identified 11% of the jail population as requiring further assessment. It correctly identified 73% of males and 62% of females, which was validated using a standardized clinical instrument (SCID).

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The screen took only an average 2.5 minutes to administer and consists of only eight yes/no questions. It is easily integrated into the screening process, and requires little training, with instructions included with the BJMHS download.

Further information and a link to the instrument itself can be found at <http://gainscenter.samhsa.gov/html/resources/MHscreen.asp>.

This URL will give you the link to both the form and the article published in the magazine Psychiatric Services (July 2005), that gives a description of the process and the results of the form in identifying a large percentage of those who need mental health assessment and treatment, over and above those who are identified as suicidal. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the GAINS EBP Center at 1-800-311-4246 or gainsebp@prainc.com.

The Commission believes that the use of this form as a supplement to the Suicide Screening Form, will help identify those inmates who are in need of mental health services to improve their safety and well being while in your custody, and to afford additional liability protection for jail administrations.

Alan J. Croce, Chairman/Commissioner

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