

# Attendance Policy

## Purpose:

The purpose of this Attendance Policy is to support clients in maintaining regular attendance to scheduled appointments, ensuring effective client care and service delivery in compliance with the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) guidelines. This policy also provides a framework for addressing missed appointments while respecting client rights.

## Scope:

This policy applies to all clients receiving services at **VCS Clinic/MHOTRS**, and is designed to promote engagement in care while taking into consideration individual circumstances that may affect attendance.

## Policy:

### 1. Missed Appointments:

- **Missed Appointments & Consequences:**

- **1st Missed Appointment:** follow-up will be conducted to explore barriers and offer assistance.
- **2nd Missed Appointment:** If attendance issues persist, a formal verbal warning will be issued.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> missed appointment is considered non-adherence and a written warning will be issued. You may be automatically discharged. The decision to discharge is at the discretion of clinic staff:**
- Failure to meet the terms of this contract will result in **discharge from services** in accordance with OMH guidelines. Prior to discharge, all reasonable efforts will be made to support client engagement and offer alternative treatment plans.

### 2. Attendance Contract:

- **Post-Warning Protocol:**

If the client returns after receiving the formal warning, they will be placed on an **Attendance Contract**. This contract will outline specific attendance expectations based on the client's treatment plan and frequency of sessions. A peer counselor may be assigned to assist the client in addressing attendance barriers. The terms of the contract will be established collaboratively, keeping the client's needs in mind.

- **Attendance Requirements:**

- For clients with **weekly sessions**: The client must attend at least **two sessions per month**.
- For clients with **bi-weekly sessions**: The client must attend at least **one session per month**.

- Clinicians will take into consideration any reasonable accommodations needed due to disability, work schedules, transportation issues, or other client circumstances, as required by OMH regulations.

### 3. Compliance:

- **Failure to Meet Attendance Contract:**

If the client fails to meet the requirements of the Attendance Contract, and reasonable efforts to address barriers have been exhausted, the client may be **automatically discharged from services**. Discharge must comply with OMH regulations, which include a documented attempt to provide alternative solutions or adjustments to the treatment plan.

- **Notice of Discharge:**

If discharge becomes necessary due to non-adherence, the client will receive written notice, including:

- The reasons for discharge.
- Information on how to appeal the decision or file a grievance.
- Instructions on how to re-enter services, if desired.
- As well as additional resources.

### Re-Intake Policy:

- Clients who have been discharged due to non-adherence with this Attendance Policy may request to return after a **30-day period**. Re-intake will be subject to availability and clinical appropriateness.
- Re-intake does not guarantee reassignment to the same clinician. The client's history will be reviewed, and an appropriate treatment plan will be developed upon re-entry.

### Responsibilities:

#### 1. Clinicians:

- Clinicians are responsible for tracking client attendance, following up on missed appointments, and documenting all communications related to missed appointments.
- Clinicians are expected to contact clients within **10-15 minutes** of the scheduled appointment time if the client has not arrived or logged in. This outreach ensures prompt follow-up and supports client engagement in treatment.
- Clinicians must ensure that all reasonable efforts have been made to support the client's attendance, including offering peer counseling or scheduling flexibility.
- All steps taken to assist the client in maintaining attendance must be clearly documented in compliance with OMH standards.

#### 2. Clients:

- Clients are responsible for attending scheduled appointments and must notify the clinic at least **24 hours in advance** if they are unable to attend.
- Clients have the right to request reasonable accommodations or adjustments to their treatment plan if they face barriers to attending appointments.
- Clients may appeal any discharge or grievance decision according to the clinic's and OMH's policies.

### **Intake Attendance Policy:**

- **Initial Appointment:**  
The first intake appointment will be scheduled by the intake coordinator. Clients may reschedule their intake appointment up to **three times** without penalty.
- **Missed or Rescheduled Appointments:**  
If a client misses, cancels, or reschedules their intake appointment more than **three times**, they will be **discharged**.
- **Follow-Up Requirement:**  
If a client does not follow up or schedule an appointment within 30 days of their initial intake session, they will be automatically discharged from the intake process. The client will need to contact the clinic for a new intake appointment if they wish to re-engage in services. This policy helps maintain efficient use of clinical resources and ensures timely care for active clients.
- Clients may come back after a 30 day period of the discharge.

#### **OMH Compliance:**

All efforts will be made to accommodate clients in scheduling intake appointments, including the use of telehealth where appropriate. The clinic will assess any special circumstances affecting attendance and will make reasonable efforts to ensure the client receives timely care.

### **Client Rights and Grievances:**

- Clients have the right to file a **grievance** with the clinic or OMH if they feel the Attendance Policy or its enforcement has been unfair or inappropriate.
- The clinic will provide clients with information on their rights, including the procedure for filing grievances and appeals.
- **OMH Grievance Process:** Clients should be informed that OMH offers support in reviewing complaints about service delivery, including issues related to attendance policies.

**Review:** This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to ensure compliance with OMH regulations and to align with clinic objectives. Changes will be communicated to all staff and clients.

#### **Effective Date:**

10/07/2024

**Contact Information:**

For questions, concerns, or assistance with this policy, please contact: **Assistant Clinic Director**