Revised Opioid Treatment Program Standards Reflect Latest Federal Guidelines

NCCHC’s Standards for Opioid Treatment Programs, originally published in 2004, have been updated to reflect the 2015 revision of the Federal Guidelines for Opioid Treatment Programs, published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Taking into account the issues unique to providing OTP services in a correctional facility, the revised standards are linked to specific federal regulations and present NCCHC’s requirements for corrections-based opioid treatment programs seeking accreditation. Expanded to more closely align with NCCHC’s Standards for Health Services for jails and prisons, this second edition includes new standards that address emergency response plans, patient and staff safety, inmate workers, mental health screening and evaluation, and patient escorts.

Like NCCHC’s other Standards, the manual is divided into nine general areas: health care services and support, patient care and treatment, special needs and services, governance and administration, personnel and training, safety, health records, health promotion and medical-legal issues.

The revision was undertaken by a task force of experts chaired by Kevin Fiscella, MD, MPH, who serves on NCCHC’s board of directors as liaison of the American Society of Addiction Medicine. Other task force members were Jeffrey Alvarez, MD, CCHP, Barbara Mariano, RN, CCHP, Carolyn Sufrin, MD, PhD, Wilma Townsend, MSW, James Voisard, BS, CCHP-A, and Katie Wingate, MSN, RN, CCHP.

The OTP Standards may be purchased online at www.ncchc.org/ncchc-store, or call 773-880-1460.

A free PDF of SAMHSA’s Medication-Assisted Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder Pocket Guide is available for download at store.samhsa.gov.

NCCHC Offers Opioid Treatment Program Accreditation

An NCCHC-accredited OTP helps ensure that incarcerated opioid users receive adequate and appropriate treatment based on nationally accepted standards. Accreditation benefits staff, visitors, workers, inmates and the communities to which they return by reducing drug use, crime and recidivism.

NCCHC is the only federally approved OTP accrediting body that specializes in correctional facilities. Accreditation by NCCHC is an important part of the overall process of obtaining necessary certification from SAMHSA.

An OTP seeking accreditation does not need to be in a facility with NCCHC-accredited health services. For more information, call 773-880-1460 or contact accreditation@ncchc.org.
The Case for Opioid Treatment Programs Behind Bars

The rate of opioid use in this country has skyrocketed to epidemic proportions. Since 2000, there has been a 200% increase in the rate of overdose deaths involving opioid pain relievers and heroin.

Nowhere is this crisis more evident than in our jails and prisons. Hundreds of thousands of people addicted to heroin and other opioids pass through American correctional facilities annually. They are incarcerated for crimes committed to get money for drugs, for alcohol or drug law violations and for crimes committed under the influence. The vast majority of them – up to 96% of people in jail – will ultimately return to their communities.

Opioid addiction is a chronic, relapsing disease similar to other chronic diseases and as deserving of effective treatment behind bars. Medication-assisted therapy – the use of approved medications such as methadone or buprenorphine in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies – is the standard of care. Addiction experts agree that with proper medical care in the form of MAT, opioid users can break the cycle of addiction.

Opioid treatment programs in correctional facilities give incarcerated users clinically sound treatment and hope for postincarceration success as opposed to an agonizing withdrawal followed by relapse once back in the community. Studies overwhelmingly associate access to MAT with positive postrelease outcomes: reductions in mortality, illicit substance use, crime, recidivism and health problems like HIV and HCV (due to reductions in needle sharing).

While operating an OTP is challenging, NCCHC provides guidelines in our recently updated Standards for OTPs in Correctional Facilities. We also accredit corrections-based OTPs using the standards to measure compliance. The absence of accredited OTPs means lost opportunities to help addicted inmates – and to create safer, healthier communities.

As lead accreditation surveyor Peter Heffernan, MBA, CCHP, said in a recent letter to CorrectCare: “Beyond the documentation, policies, procedures, credential reviews, training requirements, screenings … everything required by the 47 OTP standards, the real bottom line is this: Does all of this make a difference in the lives of incarcerated patients?” Mr. Heffernan asserts, and I agree: It does.

Best regards,

Thomas L. Joseph, MPS, CAE, CCHP
President & CEO, NCCHC
773-880-1460, thomasjoseph@ncchc.org

Annual Report Outlines NCCHC’s History

NCCHC’s 2015 Annual Report, “Looking Back, Moving Forward,” is now available on the NCCHC website. It highlights the organization’s history and impact on correctional health care over the decades. The report’s historical theme is a direct reflection of the milestones being celebrated this year – NCCHC’s 40th National Conference and 25 years of the CCHP program.

To download a copy, visit www.ncchc.org/annual-report.
State Medical Directors Come Together to Learn Best Practices

Medical directors from several states’ departments of corrections will convene in Chicago on Nov. 18 for a full day of training and discussion on the NCCHC Standards for Health Services in Prisons at the second presentation of the Executive Curriculum for State Medical Directors. This comes after the success of the inaugural gathering this past spring.

The meeting is a unique opportunity for correctional health care leaders from around the country to meet one another, learn about contemporary best practices as delineated in the Standards and exchange ideas. Brent Gibson, MD, MPH, CCHP-P, Chief Health Officer, and Tracey Titus, RN, CCHP-RN, Vice President of Accreditation, will lead the training.

State medical directors interested in attending the program can contact NCCHC at 773-880-1460 or info@ncchc.org.

Ask the Experts: NCCHC Answers Your Questions

Confidentiality of Health Records

Q Would it be considered a HIPAA violation if a correctional officer looked at the information in an inmate’s medical records? Does NCCHC have standards that address this topic?

A Standard H-02 Confidentiality of Health Records requires that the confidentiality of a patient’s written or electronic health record, as well as orally conveyed health information, is maintained. The responsible health authority should control access to the health records and health information. The RHA should maintain a current file on the rules and regulations covering the confidentiality of health records and the types of information that may or may not be shared.

NCCHC Welcomes Two New Board Members

The National Commission appointed two new members to its board of directors – Sylvie R. Stacy, MD, MPH, and Jeffrey J. Alvarez, MD, CCHP.

Dr. Stacy serves as the liaison of the American College of Preventive Medicine. She replaces Ryung Suh, MD, MPH, who served on the board for six years. Dr. Stacy is corporate medical director, utilization management, for NaphCare, Inc., where she also provides oversight for clinical aspects of correctional health care operations.

The American Academy of Family Physicians is NCCHC’s newest supporting organization; Dr. Alvarez is the AAFP’s liaison on the NCCHC board. Dr. Alvarez has been the medical director for Maricopa County Correctional Health Services since 2010. He is a physician surveyor and trainer for NCCHC’s accreditation program and a member of the Surveyor Advisory Committee. He also served on the task forces that prepared the latest Standards manuals for jails, prisons and opioid treatment programs.
NCCHC Supporting Organizations represent the fields of health, law and corrections.

Let's Talk

NCCHC will be speaking or exhibiting at:

- South Carolina Jail Administrators’ Association, Myrtle Beach, SC (Sept. 18-21)
- New Jersey County Jail Wardens Association, Atlantic City, NJ (Oct. 4-6)
- NOHJC/TCJA Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX (Oct. 8-12)
- NCCHC National Conference on Correctional Health Care, Las Vegas, NV (Oct. 22-26)
- American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence, Baltimore, MD (Oct. 29 -Nov. 2)
- Buckeye State Sheriffs’ Association, Sandusky, OH (Nov. 13-14)
- Northern California Corrections Association Keys Conference, Concord, CA (March 20-23, 2017)

Interested in bringing NCCHC’s nationally recognized health care expertise to your event or meeting? Contact Brent Gibson, MD, MPH, CCHP-P, Chief Health Officer, at brentgibson@ncchc.org.