

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>County of Sacramento</b>  <b>Department of Health Services</b>  <b>Division of Behavioral Health Services</b>  <b>Policy and Procedure</b></p>	Policy Issuer (Unit/Program)	<b>QM</b>
	Policy Number	<b>QM-10-29</b>
	Effective Date	<b>07-01-2014</b>
	Revision Date	<b>07-01-2020</b>
Title: <b>Mental Status Exam</b>	Functional Area: <b>Chart Review – Non-Hospital Services</b>	
Approved By: (Signature on File) <b>Signed version available upon request</b>  <b>Alexandra Rechs, LMFT Program Manager, Quality Management</b>		

**BACKGROUND/CONTEXT:**

The Mental Status Exam (MSE) is a fundamental evaluation tool used by Sacramento County Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Mental Health Plan (MHP) providers in the Avatar Clinical Workstation (CWS). The MSE is a dynamic tool that augments other assessment components, helps with identification of crisis situations, and provides clinical information critical to complete a clinical formulation and to assign a diagnosis.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to outline guidelines, requirements, and timelines for development and finalization of the Mental Status Exam.

**DEFINITIONS:**

As used in this policy, the following capitalized terms shall have the following meanings:

**Mental Status Exam:** is a structured method to describe a patient’s current state of mind under domains of appearance, attitude, behavior, mood and affect, speech, thought process, thought content, perception, cognition, insight and judgment. The information obtained from the MSE and other evaluation tools helps to determine medical necessity for initial and continued care requests. All assessment information, including the MSE, helps with developing a comprehensive treatment plan.

**Clinical Bundle:** The required documentation to be completed by the assigned provider including Assessment Documents and Client Plan. Refer to QM Documentation Training: CWS Documentation Bundles and your contract for the specific required documentation.

**Paperwork Cycle:** Begins at the Assessment Start Date or first Medi-Cal billable service. The Clinical Bundle must be finalized 60 days from the Assessment Start Date or first Medi-Cal billable service and annually at minimum.

**DETAILS:**

It is the policy of Sacramento County MHP to complete a MSE for all clients.

1. The MSE is required to be completed in conjunction with the Core Assessment, Core Assessment Update or annual assessment (documented in the Annual Assessment Progress Note for Low/Moderate Adult Providers). The Core Assessment is completed annually by all Children’s Providers and High Intensity Providers. The MSE must be completed and linked to the Core Assessment in order to finalize the Core Assessment.

2. The MSE is a component of a complete Clinical Bundle.
3. The MSE follows the same paperwork cycle completion requirements as the other assessments in the initial and annual Clinical Bundle.
4. Information collected for the MSE requires observation of the client and must be obtained during a face-to-face interview.
5. The MSE must be completed and finalized by staff identified in the Avatar CWS Documentation Matrix. The MSE is completed by licensed or licensed waived staff. If a staff that is not licensed or licensed waived is contributing to the MSE by documenting their observations then this would be done in collaboration, direction and with oversight along with the LPHA who would be responsible for the completion and co-signing of that MSE.
6. Information collected for the MSE must be considered within a cross-cultural context to assign an accurate diagnosis and develop a clinically sound Client Plan. For example, norms for appearance and display of emotions may differ across cultures and distinctions between culturally normative spiritual and religious beliefs must be recognized distinct from delusions and hallucinations.
7. The MSE, in conjunction with other assessment tools, is used to inform decisions about treatment strategy and choice of treatment setting.
8. The MSE may be included with a Core Assessment Report format, when a printed “hardcopy” form of the document is needed.

**Procedure:**

The MSE elements and requirements are explained below:

1. The two MSE versions, Adult and Child, are driven by selection of the client’s age range on the Core Assessment. As an example, if selecting ages 16-24 (Adult), 25-59 or 60+ age range would complete the Adult MSE; while ages 0-5, 6-15 or 16-24 (Child) would select the Child MSE.
2. As standard practice for AVATAR CWS, items in red are required in order to save to draft and to finalize. However, all items on the MSE are required pieces of documentation.
3. Information needed to complete the MSE is obtained through a combination of observation and focused questions.
4. The Adult and Child MSE follow a structured format with standard domains completed using multi-selects tables. The domains may also include subdivisions, also completed using multi-select tables. Each domain includes a comments field to record additional information as free-form text.
5. The MSE is considered complete when selections have been made for all tables. There should be no blanks.
6. Additional information about MSE may be used to inform need for additional assessment, psychological testing, etc.
7. For Avatar CWS, a Core Assessment cannot be finalized and submitted until a completed MSE is linked.

**REFERENCE(S)/ATTACHMENTS:**

- The Mental Health Plan Contract
- 9 CCR § 1810.204 Assessment
- [MHSUDS IN# 17-040](#)

**RELATED POLICIES:**

- QM 10-26 Core Assessment
- QM 10-25 Health Questionnaire
- QM 10-27 Client Plan

**DISTRIBUTION:**

Enter X	DL Name	Enter X	DL Name
X	Mental Health Staff	X	Substance Use Prevention and Treatment
X	Mental Health Treatment Center	X	Children's Contract Providers
X	Adult Contract Providers		Specific grant/specialty resource

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

- Quality Management Information  
[QMInformation@saccounty.net](mailto:QMInformation@saccounty.net)