

# CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

## SPECIAL ORDER

Section 100-199: Clinical Services

**Special Order Number: 130.01**

Effective Date: August 25, 2006

Replaces: 130

**Subject: THE *BY CHOICE* INCENTIVE SYSTEM**

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**Special Order:** This Special Order outlines the policy for the “By Choice” incentive program for all Department of Mental Health State Hospitals. Each State Hospital shall incorporate this policy into their “By Choice” Administrative Directive without interpretation. The state hospital administrative directives shall contain the definitions and procedures that are used within this Special Order.

In order to meet the safety and security concerns within a correctional environment, DMH’s Vacaville Psychiatric Program and Salinas Valley Psychiatric Program shall implement the STEP/STAGE Program and shall outline within their respective administrative directives and/or program manuals the definitions and procedures related to the STEP/STAGE Program.

**Authority:** By order of the Deputy Director Long Term Care Services.

**Purpose:** This directive provides general guidelines for the consistent implementation and monitoring of the BY CHOICE system in each state hospital. Other details are provided in the BY CHOICE Manual.

**Method:**

I. Definition

The BY CHOICE incentive system is an element of the individual’s Wellness and Recovery Plan (WRP) and is imbedded within the hospital’s therapeutic milieu. It is intended to support the recovery of individuals through the planned use of incentives and rewards. The BY CHOICE system uses points to reward routine positive behaviors that have been identified by the individuals and their Wellness and Recovery Teams as aspects of their recovery throughout their day. These points may be redeemed for desirable items or activities. In the BY CHOICE system, the individuals determine how they will allocate and earn their points.

## II. Policy

- A. During the course of each day, unit staff and Mall providers use the BY CHOICE system to positively reinforce adaptive and socially desirable behavior of the individuals and to motivate them to further their recovery.
- B. BY CHOICE Manual. The BY CHOICE Manual provides staff with details of the incentive system. Unit and Mall staff shall follow the procedures described in the BY CHOICE Manual.
- C. Points. Individuals may earn a maximum of 100 points daily. The points are allocated by the individuals in consultation with their Wellness and Recovery Teams. Points may be re-allocated by the individuals and their Wellness and Recovery Teams during scheduled reviews of their Wellness and Recovery Plans. Once earned, their points shall never be deducted, cancelled, or in any other way negated by staff. The points may be redeemed or saved by the individuals at their discretion.
- D. BY CHOICE Economy. Individuals may purchase items and activities with the points they have earned.
  - 1. Store. Individuals redeem their points for desirable items or activities in incentive stores established by the hospital for this purpose. The incentive stores are open at scheduled times. Each hospital will provide individuals reasonable access to the stores for redeeming their points.
  - 2. Selection criteria. Items and activities in the stores are selected and “priced” according to a recovery-focused, wellness economy. Individuals shall not be denied access to items or privileges that they might reasonably expect to receive by virtue of being in the hospital. Each hospital shall ensure that the selection of redeemable items and activities are consistent with the individuals’ rights as defined in policy.
- E. Evaluation. The consistent and appropriate operation of the BY CHOICE System and its success at furthering the recovery of individuals shall be formally evaluated by direct observation and systematic outcome measurements. Evaluation data shall be aggregated and included in each hospital’s Monthly Monitoring Report.
- F. Responsibility.
  - 1. The Chief of Psychology is responsible for the clinical appropriateness of the design, operation, and evaluation of the BY CHOICE Incentive System as detailed in the BY CHOICE Manual. Changes in the Manual can be made only by the statewide BY CHOICE Committee.

2. Each hospital shall appoint at a supervisory level an appropriately skilled individual to be the full-time BY CHOICE Coordinator who is responsible for the overall operation of the BY CHOICE System. Each hospital shall also appoint a full-time Assistant BY CHOICE Coordinator.
  3. The BY CHOICE Coordinator shall be responsible for:
    - a. Maintaining the BY CHOICE System's operation and consistent application on the units/programs and in the Malls;
    - b. Coordinating the hospital-wide training of staff on the BY CHOICE System;
    - c. Monitoring the quality of the training provided to staff on the BY CHOICE System;
    - d. Assisting in the integration of the BY CHOICE System into the hospital's therapeutic milieu and culture;
    - e. Assisting the statewide BY CHOICE Committee to update the BY CHOICE Manual annually, or more frequently as needed;
    - f. Coordinating data collection on fidelity and outcome evaluation; and
    - g. Facilitating endeavors toward the proper operation of the incentives stores.
  4. Enhancement Program Directors and Mall Coordinators are responsible for ensuring adequate resources and staff to administer the BY CHOICE System on units/programs and Malls, respectively.
  5. Executive Directors and Hospital Administrators shall ensure adequate and consistent funding for the incentive stores, and coordinate budgetary oversight through the BY CHOICE Coordinator.
  6. The Executive Directors shall ensure that data are collected, aggregated, analyzed and reported in the hospital's Monthly Monitoring Report.
- G. Training: All unit staff and mall providers shall be trained in the correct implementation of the BY CHOICE Incentive System. All new employees who work as unit staff or mall providers shall receive similar training through the New Employee Orientation Program. Once trained, all unit staff and Mall providers will receive additional training, as needed, to maintain their competency in implementing the BY CHOICE System.

Signature on File

CYNTHIA A. RADAUSKY, Deputy Director  
Long Term Care Services  
Department of Mental Health

August 25, 2006

Date