NORTHERN NEVADA ADULT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

SUBJECT: ELOPED, MISSING OR ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE (AWOL)

NUMBER: NN-PC-SF-04 Page 1 of 7

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I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards for responding to consumers who are absent without leave (AWOL). These procedures are necessary to ensure appropriate safeguards for the consumer and prompt notification to concerned relatives and law enforcement agencies.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of NNAMHS to report AWOL consumers to the police so that the consumer can be apprehended, taken into custody and returned to NNAMHS. It is the policy of NNAMHS to discharge an AWOL consumer who has not returned within 24-hours. Consumers who reside in board and care homes or other supported living environments will have a missing persons report filed if they had not returned to their placement within 24 hours.

III. REFERENCES

Mental Health Developmental Services (MHDS) Division Policy #4.008, entitled Reporting AWOL Consumers to Law Enforcement Agencies

MHDS Division Policy #4.003, entitled Reporting Serious Incidents/Sentinel Event Nevada Revised Statute 433A.370, Escape or absence without leave Sparks Police Department Missing Persons Report pages 1 and 2 (Appendix 1) NNAMHS Administrative Letter (Appendix 2) NNAMHS AWOL Report (Appendix 3) MHDS Division Policy #4.069, entitled Management of AWOL Episodes NNAMHS Policy NN-PI-04 Incident Report

IV. DEFINITION

- 1. AWOL (Absent Without Leave) status:
 - a. A judicially admitted consumer who is absent without leave from Northern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services (NNAMHS) consumer care unit.
 - A judicially admitted consumer who is absent without leave from NNAMHS staff escort.
 - c. A judicially admitted consumer who fails to return to NNAMHS consumer care unit from structured grounds privileges or grounds privileges.
 - d. A judicially admitted consumer who does not return to NNAMHS consumer care unit from a pass.
 - 2. Board and Care: Housing services which include group residential programs for consumers who do not require specialized intensive services but must require continuous monitoring. The Nevada Mental Health and Developmental Services Division (MHDS) contracts with board and care facilities to provide room and board, care and support for consumers.
 - Supported Living Arrangements (SLA) Provider homes: Housing services
 which include a group residential program with specialized residential services
 provided in the home by provider agency staff for support and/or skills training
 for consumers.

- 4. Intensive Supported Living Arrangements (ISLA's): Housing services providing intensive support for consumers who otherwise would require inpatient hospital care. These services are provided by provider homes with additional individualized support services based on consumer needs.
- 5. Specialized Residential Services: Housing services which provide contracted support and/or skills training by provider agency staff for consumers with specialized needs such as medical problems, hearing impairment or severe behavioral symptoms in addition to psychiatric services.

V. PROCEDURE

Assessment of AWOL Risk

- 1. All consumers served on inpatient and POU will be assessed at admission, unit transfer and before going on pass for risk of attempting to leave.
- 2. The assessment will be documented on the intershift report.

AWOL Event from Acute, Intermediate, or Psychiatric Observation (POU) Units

- When a consumer's whereabouts cannot be established, the registered nurse will be notified immediately. Nursing personnel will promptly search the immediate area.
- 2. The registered nurse shall then notify the shift supervisor and the appropriate physician.
- 3. After determination that the consumer's whereabouts are not known, the physician will issue an order to place the consumer on AWOL status.
 - a. Any consumer on any status listed below who is AWOL shall be reported immediately to the Sparks Police Department and any other appropriate law enforcement agency.
 - (i) Any consumer on a criminal commitment pursuant to NRS 175 (Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity status) and NRS 178 (Not Competent to Stand Trial).

- (ii) Any consumer on involuntary civil commitment (understood to include any emergency commitment).
- b. For voluntary consumers who may be a danger to self or others in the community, the physician can give the registered nurse an order to report the consumer's absence to the Sparks Police Department.

4. Notification

- a. The registered nurse shall notify the Sparks Police Department (353-2208) of all judicially admitted consumers who are AWOL. Voluntary consumers who are AWOL will be reported to the Sparks Police Department as ordered by the physician.
- The registered nurse shall notify the NNAMHS Director of Nursing or designee.
- The registered nurse shall notify the consumer's immediate responsible relative(s) or guardian within one hour of receiving the physician's AWOL order if the consumer has previously granted permission in writing to communicate with the family, or when family members are at direct risk of harm from the consumer.
- d If the consumer has authorized that a family member or other representative be notified of significant developments, then this person will be notified.

5. Documentation

- a. The registered nurse shall assure that an appropriate note regarding the AWOL is entered in the consumer's medical record.
- b. A NNAMHS Incident Report (blue) is to be completed in accordance with NNAMHS policy.
- c. The attending physician will sign the order and document the AWOL by the next working day in the progress note in the consumer's medical record.
- d. Law Enforcement Documentation
 - (i) The registered nurse is to complete the forms listed below.

- (ii) These forms are to be sent via fax to the Sparks Police Department within thirty (30) minutes of receiving the physician's order for AWOL status.
- (iii) A Sparks Police Department Missing Persons Report (pages 1 & 2) is to be completed and signed by the registered nurse.
- (iv) NNAMHS staff will designate on the Sparks Police Department Missing Persons Report for the Sparks Police Department to contact NCIC (National Crime Information Center) if it is believed possible that the consumer may leave the Reno/Sparks area.
- (v) The Administrator's letter is to be completed by the RN, signing the name of the physician who gives the telephone order at the bottom of the form.
- (vi) The Sparks Police Department Missing Persons Report (pages 1 & 2), Administrator's letter and fax confirmation slip shall be forwarded to the NNAMHS Performance Improvement Office the next working day.
- e. Division of MHDS Documentation
 - (i) A Serious Incident Report is completed by the Agency Director's Office and sent to MHDS Division.
 - (ii) During normal business hours (Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm), the registered nurse will notify the NNAMHS Director of Nursing and NNAMHS Agency Director.
 - (iii) After normal business hours, the registered nurse will notify the NNAMHS Director of Nursing and the NNAMHS Administrator On-Call.
 - (iv) The Serious Incident Report (SIR) is entered into the AVATAR incident reporting system.
- All AWOL consumers shall be listed on the appropriate units' daily report and on the daily supervisor's intershift report, and all such information shall be verbally reported between shifts.

- 7. Nursing supervisors and registered nurses shall cooperate with law enforcement agencies in assisting to determine the whereabouts of the AWOL consumer and their return to the hospital.
- 8. When the consumer returns to NNAMHS
 - a. All off-unit privileges shall be withheld pending complete review by the attending physician and the treatment team.
 - b. Sparks Police Department, the appropriate physician, NNAMHS Director, shift nursing supervisor, and consumer's family must be notified.
 - (i) If the consumer is returned by someone other than law enforcement, the Sparks Police Department Desk Officer needs to be notified at 353-2428 by the registered nurse.
 - c. The registered nurse needs to document in the progress notes the date, time and circumstances of the consumer's return and the name of the Sparks Police officer notified of the consumer's return.
 - d. The treatment team shall review the treatment plan.
- 9. Consumers AWOL for 24 (twenty-four) hours or more are to be discharged from NNAMHS hospital or POU services. If a consumer who has been discharged from AWOL status returns to NNAMHS, a new admission is required, including physical examination, psychiatric examination, admission assessments and admission documentation.
- 10. All inquiries from the public, except law enforcement agencies, concerning consumers who have left without authorization will be referred to the attending physician, the covering physician, or the OD as appropriate. The shift supervisor may continue to assist law enforcement personnel when they call to validate a possible AWOL.

11. In accordance with Division policy, following an AWOL event, a debriefing will be conducted by the State Medical Director /designee. This will include the facility's administration, physicians, and building maintenance staff. Discussion will include environmental risk factors which may have contributed to the AWOL.

POTENTIALLY MISSING PERSON FROM OFF-CAMPUS LIVING ARRANGMENTS.

- When a consumer residing in a residential living facility has not returned to their living arrangement when expected, the living facility staff will notify NNAMHS that the consumer has not returned home.
 - A. The initial notification will be completed within two hours.
 - B. If the consumer returns prior to 24-hours, the provider home will notify NMAMHS that the consumer has returned.
- 2. Upon receipt of this information, the individual receiving this notification will complete an incident report and contact the Service Coordination emergency number and leave a message regarding the incident.
- 3. The service coordinator will follow-up with the provider to determine if the consumer has returned to the facility.
- 4. If the consumer has not returned to the provider home within 24-hours, a missing person report will be filed with the police department for follow-up.
- 5. When the incident is resolved, the Community Services Manager or designee will complete the incident report with any follow-up information and return this report to the Performance Improvement Department for completion.