Provider Bulletin

Molina Healthcare of California

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July 25, 2025

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Adult and Youth Screening and Transition of Care Tools for Medi-Cal Mental Health Services – APL 25-010

This is an advisory notification to Molina Healthcare of California (MHC) network providers applicable to the Medi-Cal line of business.

This notification is based on All-Plan Letter (APL) 25-010, which supersedes APL 22-028, and can be found in full on the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) website at:

dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/Documents/MMCDAPLsandPolicyLetters/APL%202025/APL25-010.pdf

What you need to know:

PURPOSE

Effective June 3, 2025, APL 25-010 provides updated guidance on using standardized Adult and Youth Screening Tools and the Transition of Care Tool to guide referrals to the appropriate mental health delivery system.

These tools help determine whether a member should receive Non-Specialty Mental Health Services (NSMHS) or Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS). The APL also outlines when the tools are required or not required and explains when clinical judgment may override a score. The goal is to ensure members are connected to the right level of care quickly and appropriately.

The Screening and Transition of Care tools include:
- The Adult Screening Tool (ages 21+)
- The Youth Screening Tool (under age 21)
- The Transition of Care Tool (when members move between systems)

POLICY

MHC must use the Screening and Transition of Care tools, unless:
- The member is already receiving mental health services through MHC or the county Mental Health Plan (MHP).
- A practitioner directly refers the member based on clinical judgment.
- The member contacts the mental health delivery system directly.

Provider Action

MHC requires all contracted providers to:

- **Coordinate transition of care:** Use the Transition of Care Tool when facilitating the transfer of a member between mental health delivery systems to ensure continuity of care.
- **Apply clinical judgment:** Apply clinical judgment to override the Screening Tool score when appropriate, documenting the rationale for such decisions.
- **Follow referral process:** Understand that the Screening Tools are not required when a practitioner refers a member directly to the appropriate mental health delivery system for NSMHS or SMHS.
- **Maintain documentation:** Maintain accurate records of screenings, referrals, and any overrides in compliance with MHC documentation standards.

Resources

Access to Screening and Transition of Care Tools, training materials, and guidance, via the DHCS Screening and Transition of Care Tools webpage:

dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/Screening-and-Transition-of-Care-Tools-for-Medi-Cal-Mental-Health-Services.aspx

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POLICY (Continued)

MHC may override a Screening Tool score when clinically appropriate, with proper documentation.

Completing the Screening Tools does not constitute a clinical assessment. After a member is referred to MHC or the MHP, a full assessment by a qualified practitioner in that system is required to determine the member's need for Medically Necessary mental health services.

The Screening Tools serve to identify initial mental health needs only and do **not** replace:

1. Emergency or crisis protocols when a member is experiencing a psychiatric emergency or crisis.
2. Molina's policies on timely and equitable access to care.
3. Clinical assessments, level of care decisions, and service planning.
4. EPSDT service responsibilities for members under age 21.

Adult and Youth Screening Tools for Medi-Cal Mental Health Services

These tools gather information to guide referrals to the appropriate system when a member not currently in care contacts MHC.

- Adult Screening Tool: For members 21 and older; asks about safety needs, current or past treatment, life challenges, and risk factors like suicidality or hospitalizations.
- Youth Screening Tool: For members under 21 or someone calling on their behalf; includes similar questions plus system involvement (foster care, juvenile justice), life circumstances, and triggers for referrals such as substance use or primary care needs.

Trained staff can complete screenings in person, by phone, or video. Questions must be asked exactly as written, in order, and scored as directed. They are not required if a member is already in care or contacts a mental health provider directly. Scores determine whether the member is referred to MHC or the MHP. Licensed practitioners may override scores based on clinical judgment, with clear documentation of the rationale.

Transition of Care Tool for Medi-Cal Mental Health Services

Used when a member's mental health services move between MHC and the MHP or when additional services are added. It supports No Wrong Door and continuity of care policies and is important for the following reasons:

- It documents key details such as member needs, referring provider information, diagnoses, symptoms, history, medications, and requested services.
- It applies to both adults and youth and can include attachments like care plans or medication lists.
- It is not considered a clinical assessment and does not replace emergency protocols, clinical assessments, or EPSDT service requirements

When a transition or additional services are needed:

- A clinician decides on the transition through shared decision-making, but the tool itself may be completed by the clinician or trained staff.
- The member must be engaged throughout the process and consent obtained.
- The tool can be completed in person, by phone, or by video, and it may be integrated into existing systems as long as the exact wording and order remain intact.
- Once completed, MHC and MHP must coordinate to ensure the member is referred appropriately, connected with a provider, and able to access timely, medically necessary services.

What if you need assistance?

If you have any questions regarding the notification, please contact your Molina Provider Relations Representative below.

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If you are not contracted with Molina and your fax number is not shared with a contracted provider, and you wish to opt out of receiving the MHC Provider Bulletin, please email mhcproviderbulletin@molinahealthcare.com.

Please include the provider's name, NPI, county, and fax number, and you will be removed within 30 days.

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