

Mentally Ill Young People - Severely Disturbed - Interim Guidelines for Acute Care

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Functional Sub group Clinical/ Patient Services - Mental Health

Summary Treatment of adolescents in adult facilities.

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Applies to Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Non Declared, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, Government Medical Officers, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Dept of Health, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres, Public Hospitals

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INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR THE ACUTE CARE OF SEVERELY DISTURBED MENTALLY ILL YOUNG PEOPLE

The following interim guidelines have been developed in order to clarify the role of specialist adolescent psychiatry units and adult psychiatry units in the acute care of severely disturbed young people requiring inpatient mental health care.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Department's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Policy contained in Circular No: 90/77.

Responsibility for the initial care, assessment and referral of disturbed adolescents presenting for treatment rests with the local Mental Health Service or Admission Centre.

Wherever possible, such a person should be treated within a specialist mental health service for adolescents. In situations where such services are unavailable or unable to provide a sufficiently secure environment, the person should be referred to an adult facility. Public Psychiatric Hospitals and psychiatry units in General Hospitals have a primary responsibility to provide treatment for people residing in their established catchment areas.

In accordance with the Mental Health Act 1990 a person under the age of 16 can be admitted to an admission centre:

- as a Informal (voluntary) patient, upon the oral or written application by the person (or the guardian, if the person is under guardianship within the meaning of the Disability Services and Guardianship Act 1987) to the medical superintendent, within the conditions set out in the Act (Sections 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17).

Distributed in accordance with circular list(s):

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In accordance with the provisions incorporated in the Accounts and Audit Determination, the Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officers and their equivalents, within a public health organisation, shall be held responsible for ensuring the observance of Departmental policy (including circulars and procedure manuals) as issued by the Minister and the Director-General of the Department of Health.

- as an involuntary patient in the same way as an adult (Division 1 of Part 2, Chapter 4).

When an admission to an adult facility in these circumstances does occur, it is recommended that ongoing consultation should be arranged with specialist staff of an adolescent psychiatry unit to ensure appropriate treatment and an early referral to a more suitable facility.

Existing Facilities Which Admit Adolescents

Redbank House, Western Sydney Area Health Services.

Operates 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

These facilities are being expanded to incorporate an acute care component of 8 beds.

Rivendell Unit, Central Sydney Area Health Services.

Operates 24 hours per day, 5 days per week.

Arndell Unit, Northern Sydney Area Health Services.

Operates 24 hours per day, 5 days per week.

In addition, a new facility of 20 beds is to be built at Campbelltown Hospital, South Western Sydney Area Health Service. This unit will include 5 acute care beds.

B.J. Amos,
Director-General