


Ngā Rau Rākau Possession and Use of Illicit Substances Guideline

MHAPPM/8510

Approved by:	General Manager – Mental Health & Addiction	First Issued:	November 2002	
Signature:	David Warrington	Review Date:	August 2022	
		Next Review:	August 2025	

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to staff if a tāngata whaiora is suspected of using or be in the possession of an illicit substance, and to ensure all illicit substances are disposed of appropriately and safely.

This document is to be used in conjunction with MHAPPM/8953 – [Mental Health and Addiction Group Policy](#) which outlines the shared vision and expectations for the direction, values, principles, attitudes and ways of working to deliver a values based service.

Principles

All Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand, Te Matau a Māui Hawke’s Bay documents are based on and link back to our values; **He Kauanuanu** (respect), **Ākina** (improvement), **Raranga Te Tira** (partnership) and **Tauwhiro** (care), and are detailed so all persons are provided with clear information on the way they are expected to practice and undertake tasks.

Scope

All Ngā Rau Rākau staff.

Definitions

Refer to the Mental Health Service Definitions Glossary [\\FS3\share\Public\All Users\MHS Policy review\DEFINITIONS FOR WORDS AND TERMS IN USE WITHIN THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE.docx](#)

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Clinical Nurse Manager	Oversight of policy adherence, liaise with psychiatrists re: risk of ongoing inpatient treatment vs discharge, decision-making re: discharge/request for prosecution, arranging regular police presence/searches/drug dogs (if appropriate)

Role	Responsibility
Registered Nurses	Assessment and documentation of tāngata whaiora mental state and behaviour and risks, appropriate searches (property and pockets), obtaining UDS from tāngata whaiora, disposing of substances appropriately
Health Care Assistants	Monitor tāngata whaiora, inform staff of suspected substance use
Police	To respond/attend as required, dispose of substances if appropriate.
Security	Support staff with searches if required

Guideline

All illicit substance use is prohibited in all acute inpatient units.

If a tāngata whaiora is found with illicit substances, the police will be notified and asked to attend the unit.

Suspected Use

Any tāngata whaiora suspected of using illicit substance will be asked to:

- turn their pockets out
- take off shoes and socks
- and have their property searched.

If the tāngata whaiora refuses to allow a search staff may ask the police to carry out the search.

All tāngata whaiora suspected of using illicit substances will have their treatment reviewed. Substance abuse education and counselling is available for all tāngata whaiora who have a history of substance abuse or misuse.

NOTE staff (including security) are not able to physically search a tāngata whaiora.

Drug Screening

The tāngata whaiora may be asked to provide a urine sample. The sample is collected under the direct observation of a staff member of the same gender. Staff need to be aware that obtaining a urine sample too early following use may result in a negative result for example, cannabis may take from 1 to 3 hours to be present in urine.

The urine specimen will be used to complete an initial drug screen test on the ward, if more specific testing is required by the treating psychiatrist then the remaining sample will be sent to a diagnostic laboratory for assessment.

Drug screening for those known to be using illicit substances may be requested prior to going on leave and on return from leave (either authorised or unauthorised leave).

Discovery of Illicit Substances

If illicit substances are found on a tāngata whaiora:

- 1 The consultant psychiatrist/responsible clinician, clinical nurse manager/associate clinical nurse manager and shift coordinator are notified
- 2 An electronic event report is completed
- 3 The police are contacted to remove the illicit substance
 - a. If the police are unable to attend, two staff are required to dispose of the illicit substance in an appropriate manner

Disposal of Illicit Substances (Method)

Appropriate methods of disposal are:

- Flushing down toilet for small amounts for example, a small joint or pinch/roach.
- Larger amounts need to be kept in med safe and removed by police.

Disposal/storage needs to be documented in the Safety1st event reporting system.

Measurable Outcomes

Reduction in event reports on illicit substance use.

Short length of stay and reduction of impact of illicit substance use during an acute mental health episode.

Related Documents

MHAPPM/8953 – [Mental Health and Addiction Group Policy](#)

References

No references

Keywords

Illicit Substance
Drugs
Disposal

***For further information please contact the Clinical Nurse Manager –
Mental Health Intensive Service***