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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define Aetna Better Health’s clinical requirements for the prior authorization of Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) services.

SCOPE

The scope of this policy applies to the Louisiana Prior Authorization staff and all colleagues processing Louisiana authorization requests for Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) services.

POLICY

It is the policy of the plan that specific state directives, in addition to MCG® criteria are used when processing authorization requests for Assertive Community Treatment Services. Louisiana state qualifications, authorization and documentation requirements must be met. It defines additional Louisiana state qualifications and authorization and documentation requirements.

STANDARD

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) services are community-based therapeutic interventions that address the functional problems of members who have the most complex and/or pervasive conditions associated with serious mental illness. These interventions are strength-based and focused on supporting recovery through the restoration of functional daily living skills, building strengths, increasing independence, developing social connections and leisure opportunities, and reducing the symptoms of their illness. Through these activities, the goal is to increase the member’s ability to cope and relate to others while enhancing the member’s highest level of functioning in the community.

Interventions may address adaptive and recovery skill areas. These include, but are not limited to, supportive interventions to help maintain housing and employment, daily activities, health and safety, medication support, harm reduction, money management, entitlements, service planning, and coordination¹.

Prior Authorization of ACT Services

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) requires prior authorization and can authorized by Aetna Better Health Utilization Management clinicians for up to six (6) months. **An initial assessment must be completed prior to admission to the program. The assessment includes psychiatric**

¹ LDH Behavioral Health Services Provider Manual, Appendix E: Evidence Based Practices (EBPs) Assertive Community Treatment, page 1

history, mental status, and diagnosis to determine medical necessity and if the member meets eligibility criteria to receive ACT services.

A comprehensive person-centered needs assessment must be completed within thirty (30) days of admission to the program. The assessment includes a complete history and ongoing assessment of:

- ~~Psychiatric history, status and diagnosis,~~ **Update to the initial assessment,**
- Level of Care Utilization System (LOCUS),
- ~~Telesage Outcomes Measurement System, as appropriate,~~
- ~~Psychiatric evaluation,~~
- Strength's assessment,
- Housing and living situation,
- ~~Vocational,~~ **E**ducational and social interests and capacities,
- Self-care abilities,
- Family and social relationships,
- Family education and support needs,
- Physical health,
- Alcohol and drug use,
- Legal situation, and
- Personal and environmental resources.

The sections of the person centered needs assessment shall be completed by ACT team members with subject matter expertise as indicated by their role within the program, though the entire assessment shall be reviewed and signed off on by the licensed mental health professional (LMHP).

Utilizing the comprehensive person centered needs assessment, an initial vocational assessment (referred to as the "career profile") in addition to member interviews, shall be completed on all individuals participating in the ACT program within thirty (30) calendar days ~~after program entry for members admitted on or after 10/01/2023 for admission of new members, or within ninety (90) calendar days for existing members.~~ The career profile typically occurs over 2-3 sessions by the IPS employment specialist.

The career profile will be reviewed and updated at least every six (6) months, or more often as may be appropriate to the needs of each member. Refusals to participate in and complete the career profile assessment process shall be documented within the case notes, showing efforts to engage and clinically appropriate reasons for non-completion.

The LOCUS and ~~psychiatric evaluation~~ **comprehensive person centered needs assessment** will be updated at least every six (6) months or as

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needed based on the needs of each member, with an additional LOCUS score being completed prior to discharge.

For members participating in FACTcriminal justice involved members, the comprehensive person centered needs assessment will include items related to court orders, identified within thirty (30) days of admission, and updated every ninety (90) days or as new court orders are received.

An individualized treatment plan, responsive-reflective of the member's preferences and choices must be developed and in place at the time services are rendered. The treatment plan will include input from all staff involved in treatment of the member, as well as involvement of the member and collateral others of the member's choosing. In addition, the plan must contain the signature of the psychiatristprescriber, the team leader involved in the treatment and the member's signature. Refusals must be documented. The treatment plan must integrate mental health and substance use services for members with cooccurring disorders, define specific issues and problems that the team will address in both the short-term (two-three months) and long-term (six months), and detail with^[AD1] specific interventions or services will be provided, by who, when, for what duration, and where the service will be provided. The treatment plan will be updated every three (3) months or as needed based on the needs of each member. For members participating in FACTcriminal justice involved members, the treatment plan will include items relevant for any specialized interventions, such as linkages with the forensic system for members involved in the judicial system. Treatment plan development will include an exploration of the member's employment interests and shall be documented in the progress notes. For those individuals interested in employment, their treatment plan will include at least one vocational goal pertaining to job search, job placement, job supports, career development, or career advancement. A tracking system is expected of each ACT team for services and time rendered for or on behalf of any member. Each treatment plan must be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART), individualized to the member, and consist of the following:

- Plans to address all psychiatric conditions;
- The member's treatment goals and objectives (including target dates), preferred treatment approaches and related services;
- The member's educational, vocational, social, wellness management, residential or recreational goals, associated concrete and measurable objectives and related services;
- The member's goals and plans, and concrete and measurable objectives necessary for a person to get and keep their housing; and
- A crisis/relapse prevention plan, including an advance directive.

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When psycho-pharmacological treatment is used, a specific treatment plan, including identification of target symptoms, medication, doses and strategies to monitor and promote commitment to medication must be used.

ACT services are comprehensive of all other services, with the exception of psychological evaluation or assessment and medication management. These may be provided and billed separately for a member receiving ACT services. ACT shall not be billed in conjunction with the following services:

- Behavioral health (BH) services by licensed and unlicensed individuals, other than medication management and assessment or
- Residential services, including professional resource family care.

The ACT program provides three levels of interaction with the participating members, including:

1. Face-to-face encounter – ACT teams are highly invested in their members and maintain frequent contact to provide ongoing, responsive support as needed. Frequent contacts are associated with improved member outcomes and as such, high fidelity is considered for those programs that average four or more contacts a week per member. In order to bill beyond the first month of enrollment, the ACT team must provide a minimum of six (6) clinically meaningful face-to-face encounters with the member for each full month of service. ~~monthly with the majority of encounters occurring outside of the office. Clinically meaningful e~~Encounters shall address components of the member’s treatment plan, involve active engagement with the member, and actively assess their functioning. Teams must document clinically appropriate reasons if this minimum number of encounters cannot be made monthly. This is demonstrated through robust documentation related to efforts to contact the member, non-face to face encounters with the member, communication with the member’s support network, description of motivational interventions, assertive engagement attempts, and any other reason the minimum number of face to face encounters was neither clinically feasible nor appropriate. Provider shall obtain written approval from Aetna Better Health prior to submitting a claim for reimbursement in instances when a minimum of six encounters are not met. Aetna Better Health, based on a review of this information, can decide if reimbursement of services is still appropriate despite not achieving the minimum number of face to face encounters. The majority of encounters must occur within the community; in the event services are rendered within the office, teams must document reasons this has occurred^[AD2]^[ZE3]^[AD4]. Efforts shall be made to ensure services are provided throughout the month using assertive engagement strategies. This includes having a plan for engagement while using well thought-out strategies, activating street outreach and legal mechanisms whenever appropriate; Teams must also document reasons contacts are occurring within the office. Efforts shall be made to ensure services are provided throughout the month;

2. Collateral encounter – Program provides support and skills for members’ informal support network (i.e., people not paid to support member, including family, landlord, shelter staff, employers, or other key person) as developing and maintaining this community support further enhances members’ integration and functioning. As such, high fidelity on the Frequency of Contact domain of the DACTS (S5) is considered for those programs that make four or more contacts per month, per member. Collateral refers to members of the member’s family or household or significant others (e.g., landlord or property manager, criminal justice staff and employer) who regularly interact with the member and are directly affected by, or have the capability of affecting, theirhis or her condition and are identified in the treatment plan as having a role in treatment. A collateral contact does not include contacts with other mental health service providers or individuals who are providing a paid service that would ordinarily be provided by the ACT team (e.g., meeting with a shelter staff person who is assisting an ACT member in locating housing); and

3. Assertive outreach – Refers to the ACT team being ‘assertive’ about engagement utilizing a variety of strategies to ensure program engagement while -knowing what is going on with a member and acting quickly and decisively when action is called for, while increasing member independence. The team must closely monitor the relationships that the member has within the community and intervene early if difficulty arises. Members shall not be immediately discharged from the program due to failure to keep appointments. Retention of members is a high priority for ACT teams. Persistent, caring attempts to engage members in treatment help foster a trusting relationship between the member and the ACT team. Assertive outreach is considered a critical feature of the ACT team. As such, high fidelity on the Assertive Engagement Mechanisms domain of the DACTS (S3) is considered for programs demonstrating consistently well-thought out strategies, which may include street outreach, legal mechanisms, and care coordination, whenever appropriate.

For those members transitioning from psychiatric or nursing facilities, ACT staff must provide a minimum of four (4) encounters a week with the member during the first thirty (30) days post transition into the community. Encounters should be meaningful and, if this minimum number of encounters cannot be made, per the guidance outlined above. If this minimum number of encounters cannot be made, ACT staff must document clinically appropriate reasons for why this number of encounters cannot be achieved per the guidance outlined above.

The teams will provide comprehensive, individualized services, in an integrated, continuous fashion, through a collaborative relationship with the member. The ACT program utilizes a treatment model that is non-confrontational, follows behavioral principles, considers interactions of mental illness and substance use and has gradual expectations for abstinence[AD5][ZE6][AD7].

ACT teams will utilize IPS, an evidence-based supported employment model that is based upon eight basic principles that include the following:

1. Open to anyone who wants to work;
2. Focus on competitive employment;
3. Rapid job search;

4. Targeted job development;
5. Client preferences guide decisions;
6. Individualized long-term supports;
7. Integrated with treatment; and
8. Benefits counseling provided.

Each IPS Specialist carries out all phases of employment services; including completion of career profile, job search plan, job placement, job coaching, and follow-along supports before step-down from IPS into ongoing follow along provided through the ACT team through traditional service provision. IPS Specialists provide only employment services. To achieve good fidelity, a minimum of 90 percent of IPS Specialists' time is dedicated to employment activities.

Members are not asked to complete any vocational evaluations, i.e. paper and pencil vocational tests, interest inventories, work samples, or situational assessments, or other types of assessment in order to receive assistance obtaining a competitive job.

A career profile is typically completed during two-three sessions, and should include information about the member's preferences, experiences, skills, strengths, personal contacts, etc. The career profile is reviewed and updated as needed with each new job experience and/or at least every six months. The information may be provided by the member, treatment team, medical records, and with the member's permission, from family members, and previous employers. For new admissions, the initial career profile must be completed within 30 days after admission to the ACT program.

For those individuals who have expressed an interest in employment, an individualized job search plan is developed with the member, and is updated with information from the career profile, and new job experiences. IPS specialists will visit employers systematically, based upon the member's preferences, to learn about the employer's needs and hiring preferences. Each IPS Specialist is to make at least six face-to-face employer contacts per week, whether or not the member is present. IPS Specialist are to use a weekly tracking form to document their employer contacts. The first face-to-face contact with an employer by the member or the IPS Specialist shall occur within 30 days of the member entering the program.

IPS Specialists are to have a face-to-face meeting with the member within one week before starting a job, within three days after starting a job, weekly for the first month, and at least monthly for a year or more, on average, after working steadily, and desired by members. At this time, members are to be transitioned to step down job supports from a mental health worker following steady employment. If a need arises for more intense support by the IPS specialist, they will increase the number of interactions with the member.

IPS specialists contact members within three days of learning about the job loss. IPS specialists also provide employer support (e.g., educational information, job accommodations) at a member's request.

IPS provides assistance to find another job, when one job has ended, regardless of the reason the job ended, or the number of jobs the member has had. Each job is viewed as a learning experience, and offers to help find a new job is based upon the lessons learned.

Job supports are individualized and continue for as long as the member wants and needs the support. Members receive different types of support based upon the job, member preferences, work history, and needs. The IPS Specialist may also assist the member to obtain the job accommodations necessary for the member to perform the job efficiently and effectively.

IPS Specialists ensure that members are offered comprehensive and personalized benefits planning, including information about how their work may affect their disability and government benefits, as both are based upon their income. These may include medical benefits, medication subsidies, housing subsidies, food stamps, spouse and dependent children benefits, past job retirement benefits, and other sources of income.

Service termination is not based on missed appointments or fixed time limits. Engagement and outreach attempts made by integrated ACT team members are systematically documented, including multiple home/community visits, coordinated visits by IPS specialist with integrated ACT team member, and contacts with family, when applicable. Once it is clear that the member no longer wants to work or continue with IPS services, the IPS Specialist shall review and update the career profile as needed every six months; employment shall be screened every three months as the treatment plan is updated.

ACT agencies must adhere to all requirements established in the Provider Responsibilities section located in the Outpatient Services: Rehabilitation Services chapter of this manual. Please refer to that section for specific information on all provider responsibilities.

ACT teams provide an integrated approach to mental health services, through which the range of treatment issues are addressed from a variety of perspectives. It is critical to maintain adequate staff size and disciplinary background to provide comprehensive, individualized service to each consumer. As such, each ACT team shall have sufficient numbers of staff to provide treatment, rehabilitation and support services as needed 24 hours a day, seven days per week while consistently providing necessary staffing diversity and coverage. Each ACT team shall have the capacity to provide the frequency and duration of staff-to-program member contact required by each member's treatment plan.

Each ACT team shall have the capacity to increase and decrease contacts based upon daily knowledge of the member's clinical need, with a goal of maximizing independence. The team shall have the capacity to provide multiple contacts to persons in high need and a rapid response to early signs of relapse. The nature and intensity of ACT services are adjusted through the process of daily team meetings. IPS specialists shall participate in these meetings at least weekly.

While team sizes vary, each ACT team shall have a staff-to-member ratio that does not exceed 1:10. Teams serving fewer members must reflect an equivalent staff to member ratio, also ensuring each role identified below is reflected in the team composition and filled by staff qualified to fulfill the requirements of the position even if fulfilling multiple roles. As program

sizes grow, it is expected the number of team members will increase proportionately to ensure staff to member ratios are not exceeded. Any ACT team vacancies that occur will be filled in a timely manner to ensure that these ratios are maintained. All professional staff must be currently and appropriately licensed by the applicable professional board. Prior to providing the service, each staff member receives training on the skills and competencies necessary to provide ACT services. Each staff member must meet the required skills and competencies within six months of their employment on an ACT team. Successful completion of LDH-approved trainings can satisfy this requirement.

Each ACT team shall include at least the following roles:

1. One ACT team leader, who is a full time LMHP, (excluding Licensed Addiction Counselors (LACs)) who has both administrative and clinical skills, provides clinical supervision to other team members, and provides direct services at least 50 percent of the time;

2. One prescriber, who can be either a board-certified or board-eligible psychiatrist, a medical psychologist, or an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) with specialty in adult mental health and meeting the medical director requirements of licensure for BHS providers;

NOTE: In the event a medical psychologist or APRN are utilized, the team must be able to consult with psychiatrists.

3. Two nurses, at least one of whom shall be a registered nurse (RN). Both nurses must have experience in carrying out medical functioning activities such as basic health and medical assessment, education and coordination of health care, psychiatric medical assessment and treatment, and administration of psychotropic medication;

4. One other clinical practitioner who is in good standing in the state of Louisiana to practice within the scope of all applicable state laws, practice acts, the practitioners license, and is credentialed as follows:

a. LMHPs who are licensed in the State of Louisiana to diagnose and treat mental illness or SUDs. An LMHP includes the following individuals who are licensed to practice independently:

i. Medical psychologists;

ii. Licensed psychologists;

iii. Licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs);

iv. Licensed professional counselors (LPCs);

v. Licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFTs);

vi. LACs; and

vii. APRNs.

b. Provisionally licensed professional counselors (PLPCs); c. Provisionally licensed marriage and family therapists (PLMFTs); or d. Licensed master social workers (LMSWs)^[AD8]

5. One substance use specialist, who has a minimum of one year specialized substance use training or supervised experience;

6. One IPS specialist, who has successfully completed the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH)-approved IPS training prior to providing IPS services; at least one year of specialized training or supervised experience;

7. One housing specialist, who has at least one year of specialized training or supervised experience;

8. One peer specialist, who is self-identified as being in recovery from mental illness and/or SUDs who has successfully completed OBH required training and recognition requirements as a peer specialist; and

9. One IPS supervisor who has successfully completed the LDH-approved IPS training.

a. This shall be a .20 FTE regardless of team size;

b. This function can be fulfilled by the Team Leader as long as their ability to fulfill the obligations listed above are not compromised; or an individual who supervises IPS specialists working within multiple ACT teams; and

c. At least one year experience in employment services, which includes any experience where they have worked in programs where they helped people find jobs.

Temporary modifications of these staffing requirements can occur in the event of employee turnover though all roles must be filled by staff who meet the qualifications as defined above. ACT teams shall notify the MCOs in writing in the event of loss of staff and provide them with a written corrective action plan (CAP) for filling the position and ensuring member services are not impacted. This shall occur within seven calendar days of staff separation. When the position is filled and the CAP can be lifted, the ACT team shall provide written notification of such to the MCO. Teams not operating in a manner which consists of all staff represented in accordance to the model, shall be held to the same standards as programs operating below acceptable fidelity thresholds as defined below.

ACT teams must meet national fidelity standards as outlined within the SAMHSA Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) Toolkit. Teams shall adhere to the following:

1. New teams:

a. The ACT provider must notify the MCO in writing of its desire to create an additional team, including in this notification: justification for the creation of a new team and geographical location where the new team will operate.

i. The MCO will investigate the need for an ACT team in the proposed geographic location and will inform the ACT provider in writing of the MCO's decision to approve or deny. If the MCO gives the ACT provider the approval to establish a new team, the provider will be required to follow the standard contracting/credentialing process with the MCOs in order to render services.

b. The ACT provider must submit documentation to the MCO for contracting purposes including evidence of fidelity to the model including findings of self-evaluation using the DACTS/General Organizational Index (GOI) in addition to submitting the appropriate credentialing materials for vetting purposes and contact the MCO to ensure that all credentialing verification steps are met.

i. The self-evaluation must reflect a minimum score of a 3.0 on the DACTS/GOI in order to be eligible to provide Medicaid funded services to members.

c. The provider must also adhere to the following related to newly established teams:

i. Submit monthly outcomes reporting to the MCOs via a template provided by the MCOs.

ii. Undergo a fidelity review using the DACTS/GOI and the Supported Employment Fidelity Scale by an MCO-identified third party within six (6) months of implementation:

1. This review must reflect a minimum score of 3.0 on the DACTS/GOI in order to maintain certification and the ability to accept new members, be eligible to provide Medicaid funded services to members, and increase staff-to-member ratios;

2. If the MCO identifies a potential Quality of Care concern based on the data from the monthly Outcome Measures report the team may be subject to corrective action. The team will implement an MCO approved corrective action plan immediately for any individual DACTS criterion that rates a one (1) or two (2). This plan should be implemented within thirty (30) days of findings or sooner as determined necessary by the MCO to mitigate health and safety issues for members; and

3. If the fidelity review findings does not reflect a minimum overall score of 3.0 on the DACTS/GOI, the provider will forfeit

any new referrals until an overall score of 3.0 is achieved. The provider will be permitted to work with existing members as long as there are no health and safety violations with operations as determined by the MCO or LDH. The team shall implement a remediation plan and undergo another fidelity review within three (3) months by the fidelity monitor. This review will be at the cost of the provider. If the team achieves an overall score of 3.0 or greater on the DACTS/GOI in the subsequent review, the team can begin accepting new referrals;

4. The Supported Employment Fidelity Scale review must reflect continued improvement toward the desired score of **100-four on the rating scale** (good fidelity); and

5. The team will implement an MCO approved corrective action plan immediately for any individual Supported Employment Fidelity Scale criterion that rates below **100-four on the rating scale** (good fidelity). This plan must be implemented within thirty (30) days of findings or sooner as determined necessary by the MCO to mitigate health and safety issues for members.

Existing teams:

- a. Must submit monthly outcomes reporting to MCOs via a template provided by the MCOs;
- b. Must participate in fidelity reviews using the DACTS/GOI conducted by the MCO or designee at least annually (every twelve (12) months) or more frequently as prescribed by the MCO;
- c. The team will implement an MCO approved corrective action plan immediately for any individual DACTS criterion that rates a one (1) or two (2);
- d. Must undergo a fidelity review using the Support Employment Fidelity Scale by an MCO-identified third party in conjunction with the DACTS/GOI fidelity review;
 - i. This review must reflect continued improvement toward the desired score of **100-four on the rating scale** (good fidelity);
 - ii. The team will implement an MCO approved corrective action plan immediately for any individual Supported Employment Fidelity Scale criterion that rates below **100-four on the rating scale** (good fidelity). This plan must be implemented within thirty (30) days of findings or sooner as determined necessary by the MCO to mitigate health and safety issues for members.
- e. Must achieve a score of 3.0 and above on the DACTS/GOI in order to maintain certification and the ability to accept new clients;

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- f. If a score of 4.2 or higher on the DACTS/GOI is achieved, the team will be deemed as operating with “exceptional practice”:
- i. MCOs may grant extensions of eighteen (18) month intervals between fidelity reviews for teams operating with “exceptional practice”.
- g. Operating below acceptable fidelity thresholds:
- i. Teams, which achieve less than a 3.0 on the DACTS/GOI, will forfeit the ability to accept new members though they can continue to work with existing members as long as there are no health and safety violations with operations as determined by the MCO or LDH;
 - ii. Teams shall implement a remediation plan and undergo another fidelity review within three (3) months by the MCO or designee. This review will be at the cost of the provider. If the team achieves an overall score of 3.0 or greater on the DACTS/GOI in the subsequent review, the team can begin accepting new referrals; and
 - iii. If the team achieves more than a 3.0 on the DACTS/GOI in subsequent review, the team can begin accepting new referrals.

Medical Necessity Criteria

In addition to the LDH Behavioral Health Services Provider Manual, the primary medical necessity criteria used to authorize ACT services is **29th** Edition MCG Guideline Assertive Community Treatment ORG: B-808-T (BHG). The criteria outlined can be accessed through the referenced portal, <https://mcg.aetna.com>².

ACT serves members eighteen (18) years old or older who have a severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI) and members with co-occurring disorders listed in the diagnostic nomenclature (current diagnosis per DSM) that seriously impairs their functioning in the community.

The member must have one of the following diagnoses:

- Schizophrenia;
- Other psychotic disorder;
- Bipolar disorder; and/or
- Major depressive disorder.

These may also be accompanied by any of the following:

- Substance use disorder; or
- Developmental disability.

[AD9]

Include one or more of the following service needs:

- Two (2) or more acute psychiatric hospitalization and/or four (4) or more emergency room visits in the last six (6) months;
- Persistent and severe symptoms of a psychiatric disability that interferes with the ability to function in daily life;

² 29th Edition MCG Guideline Assertive Community Treatment (B-808-T)

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- Two (2) or more interactions with law enforcement in the past year for emergency services due to mental illness or substance use (this includes involuntary commitment);
- Currently residing in an inpatient bed, but clinically assessed to be able to live in a more independent situation if intensive services were provided;
- ~~One or more incarcerations in the past year related to mental illness and/or substance use (Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT));~~
- Psychiatric and judicial determination that FACT services are necessary to facilitate release from a forensic hospitalization or pre-trial to a lesser restrictive setting (FACT); or
- Recommendations by probation and parole, or a judge with a FACT screening interview, indicating services are necessary to prevent probation/parole violation (FACT).

Must have one (1) of the following:

- Inability to participate or remain engaged or respond to traditional community-based services;
- Inability to meet basic survival needs, or residing in substandard housing, homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless; or
- Services are necessary for diversion from forensic hospitalization, pretrial release or as a condition of probation to a lesser restrictive setting (FACT).

Must have three (3) of the following:

- Evidence of co-existing mental illness and substance use disorder;
- Significant suicidal ideation, with a plan and ability to carry out within the last two (2) years;
- Suicide attempt in the last two (2) years;
- History of violence due to untreated mental illness/substance use within the last two (2) years;
- Lack of support systems;
- History of inadequate follow-through with treatment plan, resulting in psychiatric or medical instability;
- Threats of harm to others in the past two (2) years;
- History of significant psychotic symptomatology, such as command hallucinations to harm others; or
- Minimum LOCUS score of three (3) at admission³.

Exception_[AD10]_[ZE11]_[AD12] **criteria:**

- The member does not meet medical necessity criteria above but is recommended as appropriate to receive ACT services by Aetna Better Health, the ACT team leader, clinical director and psychiatrist, in order to protect public safety and promote recovery from acute symptoms related to mental illness. Examples include:
 - Members discharging from institutions such as nursing facilities, prisons, and/or inpatient psychiatric hospitals,

³ LDH Behavioral Health Services Provider Manual, Appendix E: Evidence Based Practices (EBPs) Assertive Community Treatment, pages 2-4

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- **Members on an Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) order:**
- Members with frequent incidence of emergency department (ED) presentations and/or involvement with crisis services, **and**
- Members identified as being part of the My Choice Louisiana Program target population who meet the following criteria, excluding those members with co-occurring SMI and dementia where dementia is the primary diagnosis:
 - Medicaid-eligible members over age eighteen (18) with SMI currently residing in NF or
 - Members over age eighteen (18) with SMI who are referred for a Pre-Admission Screening and Resident Review (PASRR) Level II evaluation of nursing facility placement on or after June 6, 2016.

Members whose functioning has improved to the point that they no longer require the level of services and supports typically rendered by an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team, should be transitioned into a lower level of care. When making this determination, considerations will be made regarding the member's ability to be served within the lower level of care available to them. The ACT team should begin implementing the discharge plan and preparing the member as functioning improves to the point that they no longer require the level of services and supports⁴.

ACT teams must formally assess member's needs for ACT services at least once every six (6) months using the ACT Transition Assessment Scale, a tool that establishes criteria to help determine whether a consumer member is ready to be placed on a graduation track to transition to a less intensive level of care. An individual may be placed within the graduation track if they are assessed at a one (1) or two (2) on all the scaled items. Graduations shall also be considered for individuals assessed at a one (1) or two (2) on all scaled items but assessed at a three (3) on the Activities of Daily Living item and three (3) or four (4) on the Community Integration item. Further, assess the member's Motivation to Graduate or Transition from ACT, again considering graduations for individuals assessed at a three (3) or four (4) on this item. Teams are encouraged to continually assess the service needs of participants as the member's needs change.

It is imperative that graduation be gradual, planned and individualized with assured continuity of care. More specifically, ACT teams shall employ the following strategies regarding graduations:

⁴ LDH Behavioral Health Services Provider Manual, Appendix E: Evidence Based Practices (EBPs) Assertive Community Treatment, page 4, 8

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1. Introduce the idea of graduation from the very beginning of the member's enrollment (even during the engagement phase) and continue the discussion throughout their enrollment;
2. Frame graduation within the larger process of the member's recovery, enhanced well-being and independence in life;
3. Involve ACT team members in a discussion of the individual's potential for graduation and plans necessary to ensure successful transition to a less intensive level of care;
4. Involve the member in all plans related to his/her graduation;
5. Assess the member's motivation for transition to the graduation track and provide motivational interviewing interventions as appropriate to increase their comfort and interest in the graduation;
6. Be prepared with appropriate interventions should the member temporarily experience an increase in symptoms or begin to "backslide" on treatment goals in response to graduation plans;
7. Involve the member's social network, including their family or support of choice, in developing and reviewing their graduation plan to the extent approved by the participant;
8. Coordinate several meetings with member, relevant ACT team members, and new service provider to introduce the new provider as well as review the participant's current status, progress in ACT and future goals;
9. Temporarily overlap ACT services with those of new provider for 30-60 days; and
10. Monitor the member's status following transition and assist the new provider, as needed, especially for the next 30-60 days.

Teams shall ensure member participation in discharge activities, as evidenced by the following documentation:

1. The reasons for discharge as stated by the member and ACT team;
2. The participant's biopsychosocial status at discharge;
3. A written final evaluation summary of the member's progress toward the goals set forth in the person-centered treatment plan;
4. A plan developed in conjunction with the member for follow-up treatment after discharge; and

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5. The signature of the member, their primary practitioner, the team leader and the psychiatric prescriber.

When clinically necessary, the team will make provisions for the expedited re-entry of discharged members as rapidly as possible. If immediate re-admission to the ACT team is not possible because of a full census, the provider will prioritize members who have graduated but need readmission to ACT.

APPLICABLE CPT/HCPCS CODES

This policy applies the additional definitions, qualifications, criteria and documentation requirements to the procedure codes listed below. Listing of a code in this policy does not imply that the service described by the code is a covered or non-covered health service. Benefit coverage for health services is determined by federal, state, or contractual requirements and applicable laws that may require coverage for a specific service. The inclusion of a code does not imply any right to reimbursement or guarantee claim payment. Other Policies and Guidelines may apply.

CPT/HCPCS	Description
H0039	Assertive Community Treatment

DEFINITIONS:

MCG ®	MCG, including Chronic Care Guidelines, are evidence-based clinical guidelines that are updated annually. They support prospective, concurrent, and retrospective reviews; proactive care management; discharge planning; patient education, and quality initiatives.
Prior Authorization	Process in which providers must obtain approval from prior to services provided.

Aetna Better Health of Louisiana

Bridget Galatas
Chief Executive Officer

Antoinette Logarbo, MD
Chief Medical Officer

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Jennifer Thomas-Taylor, MD
Behavioral Health Medical Director

Resources:

- 2023 Louisiana Medicaid Managed Care Organization Statement of Work
- Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) Behavioral Health Services Provider Manual, Appendix E-1: Evidence Based Practices (EBPs) Assertive Community Treatment, ~~5~~ Revised ~~01/12/2024~~12/17/2025

EXHIBIT(S):