TO: Providers of Residential Services in Settings of 16 Persons or Fewer

FROM: Lilia Teninty, Director
Division of Developmental Disabilities

DATE: December 2, 2008

RE: PRN Medications

The intent of Rule 116 is to ensure the safe administration of medications, unless excluded by Rule or Bureau of Clinical Services direction, to persons with developmental disabilities served in specific community settings of 16 persons or fewer. Regarding PRN (“as needed”) medications, it is important to understand that administering a PRN medication to someone for a seemingly mild condition may mask important signs and symptoms that would otherwise alert service providers to seek appropriate medical intervention. In some instances, the person served may be unable to report symptoms of potentially serious illness. For these reasons, it is important that all medications, including PRN medications, be used judiciously and under close supervision.

All medications ordered for PRN use must be individualized and based on a known clinical condition or a reasonable “history” of a known clinical condition. Importantly, it is expected that order(s) for all medication(s), including PRNs, include the condition(s) for which the medication may be given; clear direction as to when to administer and frequency; maximum or stop dosage; specific individualized clinical signs and symptoms to monitor; and direction as to when the condition be further assessed by a nurse or physician.

Upon administration of a PRN medication, staff must carefully monitor for effectiveness of the PRN medication, side effects and other adverse outcomes. All clinical concerns regarding the use of medications and adverse clinical outcomes, either secondary to the administration of a medication or other clinical condition, must be promptly assessed by a nurse or physician or, if indicated, emergency services. Appropriate documentation must be included within the person’s record.

After the need for a PRN medication has been determined in consultation with the person’s physician, the PRN medication must be immediately available for administration, as ordered.

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