



Department of Developmental Disabilities

John Kasich, Governor
John L. Martin, Director

To: Superintendents, SSA Directors, COG Directors

From: Lori Horvath

Date: May 18, 2016

Subject: Borderline Intellectual Functioning and Level of Care

The purpose of this communication is to share new information received from the American Psychiatric Association (APA) related to borderline intellectual functioning and how it impacts level of care determinations.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, Fourth Addition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR) included a multiaxial assessment system. Axis II included Personality Disorders and Mental Retardation. The DSM-IV-TR indicated that borderline intellectual functioning was to be coded on this axis. As a result, DODD had accepted borderline intellectual functioning as a qualifying condition for level of care determinations.

When the APA published the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-V), the multiaxial system was eliminated. Borderline intellectual functioning remains classified in the section of “other conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention.” In response to this change and receiving several inquiries from county boards regarding the continued use of borderline intellectual functioning in level of care determinations, DODD contacted the APA for guidance.

A response was received from the Assistant Director for DSM Operations in the Division of Research of the APA. The diagnostic criteria for intellectual disabilities includes both deficits in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Borderline intellectual functioning is based solely on IQ score and, as a result, is not classified as an intellectual disability in the DSM-V. She noted “the best place to discuss borderline intellectual functioning is not as a diagnosis but as a vulnerability factor in the case formulation.”

As a result of this guidance, DODD will no longer accept borderline intellectual functioning as a diagnosis for level of care determinations. Individuals who were previously determined eligible using this as a diagnosis will require a new clinician’s verification form at the time of their next level of care redetermination. If no physical or mental impairment, other than a mental illness or borderline intellectual functioning, is noted, the person will no longer meet level of care criteria.

Please feel free to contact Amy Coey at Amy.Coey@dodd.ohio.gov with any questions.