DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Approved By: Michael Moseley **Approval Date:** 8/23/06

Policy on Placement of Long Stay Patients

I. **Background:** This policy is developed to provide guidance to the State psychiatric hospitals in developing and determining placement and housing options for discharging patients. Research evidence documents, and consumer experience clearly demonstrates, the vital role suitable and available housing plays in promoting stability, satisfaction, and quality of life in the community. The State of North Carolina, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services strongly support the effort to eliminate homelessness in the mentally disabled. In order to combat homelessness and its debilitating effects upon consumers, this policy on identification of suitable housing and placement for discharging patients is established.

It is the policy of State Operated Services that discharge to homeless shelters or conditions is not appropriate and not in the best interests of patients. As a consequence, suitable housing shall be determined and arranged for each long stay patient as a condition of discharge from a State psychiatric hospital. In addition, best efforts shall be made to identify suitable housing for discharging non-long stay patients to avoid discharging to homeless shelters or conditions.

II. **Scope:** This policy sets forth the definition of suitable housing and long stay patient, and it establishes procedures to be followed in making arrangements for placement and housing in the discharge planning process. This policy applies to the State psychiatric hospitals and their employees engaged in discharge planning processes.

III. **Definitions:**

1) Suitable housing "Suitable housing" meets basic needs for shelter, personalized space, and personal safety in a permanent or transitional (e.g., group home) setting.

EFFECTIVE:	06/01/06
SUPERSEDES:	APSR 110-12 12/01/03
OPR:	Chief, State Operated Services
DISTRIBUTION:	State Psychiatric Hospitals

Suitable housing also supports access to wholesome nutrition, appropriate social interaction, recreational opportunities, peer supports, and necessary therapeutic interventions. Homeless shelters do not meet the definition of "suitable housing."

2) Long stay patient: At the time of anticipated or planned discharge, the patient resides in a long-term or rehabilitation ward of the hospital or has a length of stay of 30 days or longer. Forensic patients (HB95, SB43, and pre-trial evaluation) are excluded from this definition.

IV. **Procedures**

1) Hospital treatment team members engaged in discharge planning, in collaboration with LME staff, shall identify housing or placement needs and options in the community that most fully address the identified needs. Whenever possible, the patient shall be provided the opportunity to visit the housing options that most fit her/his identified needs and preferences.

2) Long stay patients shall not be discharged until arrangements have been completed for entry into suitable housing.

3) Best efforts should be made by hospital and LME staff to identify suitable housing options for non-long stay patients in discharge planning procedures. Whenever possible, patients should be provided with the opportunity to learn about and/or visit suitable housing options before discharge, and placement should be made to suitable housing options of the patient's preference.

Any exception to the above policy must be approved by the Chief, State Operated Services or designee.

EFFECTIVE: 06/01/06
SUPERSEDES: APSR 110-12 12/01/03
OPR: Chief, State Operated Services
DISTRIBUTION: State Psychiatric Hospitals