InterQual® Behavioral Health

Criteria Summary

The InterQual Behavioral Health Criteria consist of the Level of Care products and the Procedure product, with the Level of Care products spanning the continuum of care, from acute care settings through residential treatment and ambulatory levels of care. The comprehensive range of level-of-care alternatives allows for movement up and down the continuum of care, while content is tailored to the needs of seniors, adults, adolescents and children. The depth of the criteria allows reviewers to consider the severity of illness as well as other episode-specific variables and match the level of care to the patient's current condition.

The Criteria reflect clinical interpretations and analyses and cannot alone either resolve medical ambiguities of particular situations or provide the sole basis for definitive decisions. The Criteria are intended solely for use as screening guidelines with respect to the medical appropriateness of healthcare services and not for final clinical or payment determinations concerning the type or level of medical care provided, or proposed to be provided, to a patient.

Medical Policies developed by BCBSMA may further inform medical necessity determinations.

Development of InterQual Criteria

InterQual clinical decision-support criteria are based on well-researched medical evidence that is reviewed and updated annually. The criteria consist of rule-based clinical indicators or statements that focus on each individual patient's clinical presentation. The content is developed in annual cycles with five stages.

- **Select new topics and content for revisions.** The InterQual clinical team selects new areas to develop and areas to revise based on systematic, continuous review of the most current medical and behavioral health literature and feedback from clients and clinical consultants over the course of the year.

- **Research evidence-based literature.** Our clinical team performs a comprehensive search and critical appraisal of the evidence-based literature, selecting the best available valid evidence. Input from our external consultants is incorporated into the initial drafts or revisions. There are more than 16,000 citations within the InterQual clinical decision support tools. All recent references in the criteria are assigned classifications that identify the type of evidence. Providers who access the criteria via Review Manager can link directly from short citations in the InterQual notes to the long citation reference and abstracts. The InterQual Evidence Classification system identifies the type of evidence as follows:
  - **Class I:** Meta analysis or systematic review
BH Level of Care Criteria Products

Class II: Randomized control trial
Class III: Observational or epidemiologic study
Class IV: Evidence-based guideline
Class V: Expert opinion, panel consensus, literature review, text or reference book, descriptive study, case report, or case series

Review and revise. Clinical consultants review the content and suggest revisions to the InterQual team, who synthesizes them, and then sends the content back to the consultants for further review in an iterative, consensus-building process.

Format and review for quality assurance. Content is prepared for software and reviewed for clinical consistency and completeness across products by the InterQual clinical staff before distribution to our clients.

BH Level of Care Criteria Products

The Behavioral Health Criteria products are:
- Adult and Geriatric Psychiatry
- Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- Substance Use Disorders
- BH Procedures

Level of Care Review Types

There are six types of reviews that can be performed using the InterQual Level of Care Criteria.

- Preadmission Review - Performed prior to a planned admission.

- Admission or Initial Review - Performed to determine appropriateness of admission to a level of care. Reviews are completed for an admission and when a patient is transferred to a higher level of care. Reviews are based on the patient’s severity and treatments being provided or proposed to be provided.

- Continued Stay or Ongoing Review - Performed to determine if the level of care is still appropriate. Reviews are based on the patient’s clinical stability, treatment and/or progress with treatment.

- Discharge Review - Performed to determine the safety of discharge or transfer from one level of care to another.

- Secondary or Secondary Medical Review - A next level review performed when the primary review results do not meet criteria. The organization determines the qualifications of the secondary reviewers. Secondary review is required for a “not approved” outcome.
Review Process

The criteria products are used to perform a primary or secondary review. Typically, a nurse reviewer conducts the primary review using the criteria to determine whether an intervention is appropriate. If the criteria requirements are not met during this first level review, or if the reviewer is uncertain about aspects of the review, a secondary review is initiated. A physician, specialist, or supervisor conducts the secondary review. The secondary reviewer carefully reviews the clinical information to determine the appropriateness of the request. When the patient’s clinical condition warrants an intervention, screening criteria can serve to justify and document the decision to provide that service.

Adult and Geriatric Psychiatry Criteria

The Adult and Geriatric Psychiatry criteria are used for patients with a primary psychiatric diagnosis, who are 18 years of age or older. The product provides support for determining the appropriateness of admission, continued stay, discharge and alternate level of care recommendations for members in the following levels of care. (Coverage varies by your health plan’s subscriber certificate):

- Inpatient
- Observation
- Residential Crisis Program
- Residential Treatment Center
- Supervised Living
- Partial Hospital Program
- Home Care
- Intensive Community-Based Treatment
- Intensive Outpatient Program
- Outpatient

Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Criteria

The Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Criteria are used for patients with a primary psychiatric diagnosis, who are 4 through 17 years of age. The product provides support for determining the appropriateness of admission, continued stay, discharge and alternate level of care recommendations for members in the following levels of care. (Coverage varies by your health plan’s subscriber certificate):
Inpatient
Observation
Subacute Care
Residential Treatment Center
Supervised Living
Partial Hospital Program
Intensive Community-Based Treatment
Intensive Outpatient Program
Outpatient

### Substance Use Disorders Criteria

The Substance Use Disorders criteria are used for patients with a primary substance use disorder diagnosis, who are 13 years of age and older. The product provides support for determining the appropriateness of admission, continued stay, discharge and alternate level of care recommendations for members in the following levels of care. (Coverage varies by your health plan’s subscriber certificate):

- Inpatient
- Inpatient Detoxification
- Inpatient Rehabilitation
- Observation
- Residential Treatment Center
- Supervised Living
- Partial Hospital Program
- Intensive Outpatient Program
- Outpatient

### Procedures Criteria

The BH Procedures criteria are used to determine the medical appropriateness for the following procedures. (Coverage varies by your health plan’s subscriber certificate):

- Applied Behavior Analysis for Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Electroconvulsive Therapy (Geriatric, Adult, and Adolescent populations)
- Neuropsychological Testing (Geriatric, Adult, Adolescent, and Child populations)
- Pharmacogenomic Testing for Psychotropic Medication Drug Response
- Psychological Testing (Geriatric, Adult, Adolescent, and Child populations)
- Stereotactic Introduction, Subcortical Electrodes (Geriatric and Adult populations)
- Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (Geriatric and Adult populations)
- Vagus Nerve Stimulation (Geriatric and Adult populations)

### Criteria Training Programs

InterQual’s comprehensive range of training programs give the new user a working knowledge of InterQual criteria and software, and the experienced user a quick way to get the most from
InterQual products and annual enhancements. Training is available on all InterQual Criteria sets. Any questions about training should be directed to the licensee of the InterQual Criteria products.