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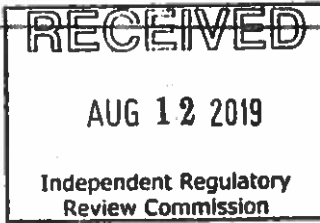


**Step By Step, Inc.**

Opening the doors to  
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August 12, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,



*Celebrating over 35 years of excellence*

a CARF Accredited Organization  
www.stepbystepusa.com

My name is Ryan Baran, and I am the Service Director for the Children's Behavioral Health Department of Step By Step, Inc. We are based in Wilkes-Barre and provide Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS) to children in eight counties in the state. Additionally, we also operate an exception program, The Specialized Autism Support Program (SASP). This program currently operates in 8 early intervention classrooms and 19 primary and elementary-aged classrooms in 2 counties.

The following comments are in reference to the Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS) regulations (No. 3209 Department of Human Services #14-546: Intensive Behavioral Health Services).

It is very difficult for us to name whether or not we support or oppose these regulations. We are supportive of the idea of enacting regulations for our services as we feel that they can help solidify the services that children would receive.

However, we oppose these regulations in their current form. As you will see as you read our comments, we have very serious concerns about the reimbursement rates for these services and the timeframes in which we will be expected to enact these regulations. These proposed regulations are calling for dramatic changes in a short amount of time. We would oppose their being enacted as they are currently written.

Our comments are below. Thank you for taking the time to read and review them.

Sincerely,

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### 1155.31 General payment policy

- Is the expectation that agencies will need to comply with all regulations within 90 days of promulgation?
- When will the IBHS Fee Schedule be determined? This information will be critical to agencies assessing their needs and where to best direct their resources.

### 1155.32 Payment conditions for individual services

- How can a licensed person be expected to make an accurate determination of need to include on his/her written order if he/she is not completing an assessment? What will the written order be based on?
- With all of the focus and changes on staff qualifications, why is it now acceptable for the assessment to be completed by staff with lesser qualifications than we currently have (e.g. licensed psychologists)?
- Will there be trainings or workshops offered to "licensed physicians" so they can be better equipped to identify the need for services and write these written orders for children?

### 5240.7 Coordination of services

- (e) This section needs to be clarified – is this referring to children currently at the agency who are not receiving all of their hours or is this in regards to families who are looking to get their children involved in services for the first time?

### 5240.11 Staff requirements

- (b) (2) Agencies should *attempt* or *try* to accommodate the schedules of parents, legal guardians, and caregivers.
- (f) Due to a number of factors (low reimbursement rates, high turnover rates, etc.), many agencies will not be able to staff the maximum number of service hours that are approved. What will happen to those agencies who are unable to provide the maximum number of service hours?
- (f) If the written order and the ITP are in disagreement about the number of service hours needed (e.g. the ITP recommends less hours than the written order), will the agency still have to meet the staffing patterns to provide the maximum number of hours identified in the written order?

### 5240.13 Staff training plan

- (7) What is the process for having the department approve trainings? Is there concern that the department will be overwhelmed by this? If so, that would slow down the day-to-day operation of agencies and lead to longer wait times before children can receive services.

### 5240.71 Staff qualifications for individual services

- (b) Why are staff in the individual services section being required to meet the same requirements as those in the ABA section?

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### **5240.72 Supervision of staff who provide individual services**

- (1) and (2) This appears to be an excessive amount of supervision for Masters' level clinicians. One hour per month would seem to be an appropriate amount.

### **5240.81 Staff qualifications for ABA services**

- There is genuine concern about the ability of agencies to fill the Clinical Director position. This depends on availability of candidates as well as the rate of reimbursement that agencies will receive.

### **5240.11 Waivers**

- Will all current program exceptions fall under one of the identified categories (individual services, ABA services, group services, or EBT services)?

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