DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/MR PROGRAM
POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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**Title:** Signing and Distribution of the Prioritization of Urgency of Needs for Service (PUNS)

**Policy:** The Dauphin County Mental Retardation Program will assure that Prioritization of Urgency of Needs for Service (PUNS) forms are completed and distributed in a timely manner in compliance with ODP requirements. PUNS is to be reviewed annually.

**Definitions:**
CMU – Dauphin County’s Supports Coordination Organization
PUNS – Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services for Persons with Mental Retardation

PUNS categories - The information obtained through the PUNS process allow the staff at the SCO to categorize the needs of people with mental retardation within three categories of urgency of need:

- Emergency Need
- Critical Need
- Planning for Need

PUNS process – The PUNS process is designed to gather information to categorize the urgency of the needs of people with mental retardation who have requested services from county mental retardation system.

**Background:**
Multiple entities use the information provided by the completion of a PUNS. The Supports Coordinator (SC) and County/Administrative Entity use PUNS to understand and plan for the individual’s needs. The information in PUNS should be considered during the Individual Support Planning (ISP) process. Information from PUNS is used by multiple entities for planning.
including:

- The County/Administrative Entity uses PUNS information to plan for county budgeting and service provision. PUNS information is used throughout the year for planning purposes.

- The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) uses aggregate PUNS information for statewide planning and budgeting. These data are used to help develop the Governor’s Budget request.

- The person and the family use PUNS to understand what category of urgency they are in and how they relate to others waiting for services.

- The advocacy community uses PUNS information to communicate with legislators about the needs of people with mental retardation waiting for community mental retardation services.

**Procedures:**

1. A PUNS is completed annually for all people residing within Dauphin County who meet the following criteria:
   
   A. Those people who are currently waiting for new or enhanced services.
   B. Those people who have a projected need for service within the next five years.
   C. Those people who request or who are recommended for a change in residential services/supports (request or recommendation could come from the individual, family, friends, professionals currently supporting the individual).

   Note: If the person’s need can be met immediately (e.g. through the ISP process or available funding), a PUNS form does not have to be completed.

2. The PUNS form should be completed by the SC once the intake process has been completed, the person has been found eligible and is registered for MR services, and an SC has been assigned.

3. The PUNS form must be signed by the people present during completion of the PUNS form. These signatures indicate participation in the process only, not necessarily agreement.

4. If the person or family refuses to sign, the SC should document this refusal and the reason for this refusal in service notes. This refusal can also be documented on the form in the signature area. As long as this documentation is present, the PUNS can be finalized without signatures.
5. The person/family can request a copy of the PUNS form completed at the meeting at any time. If the PUNS is completed over the phone at the request of the person and/or family, the completed PUNS should be mailed to the person/family for signature before finalizing in HCSIS.

6. The information collected on the PUNS form must be entered into HCSIS and finalized in HCSIS within ten working days of the meeting during which the form was completed.

7. The 10-day time frame for finalization does not begin until the signed form is received by the SC. If the person/family chooses not to sign the form at the meeting because they want time to review it, they should be encouraged to return the signed form to the SC as soon as possible; the 10-day time frame does not begin until the signed form is received by the SC.

8. A copy of the finalized HCSIS PUNS form must be sent to the person/family within five (5) working days of finalization. The HCSIS PUNS should contain the same information as the PUNS completed during the meeting. The HCSIS PUNS is sent to the person/family because it is the record captured in HCSIS and used for planning.

9. The date that the form is sent to the person/family should be captured in service notes in HCSIS and written directly on the finalized copy. If, during an annual review, no changes are needed, the PUNS form should still be signed by the person/family. If a person has no unmet needs, a service note must indicate that the PUNS was discussed and there were no needs identified.

10. When the PUNS is sent to the person/family, there should be a cover letter sent which explains next steps, what to do if there is disagreement, and the rights of the individual.

11. In the event that there is disagreement on the PUNS, persons should be directed to the bottom of the transmittal letter, where there will be a place for the person and/or family to disagree with the information on the PUNS form that was received. If there is disagreement, the bottom of the form should be signed and sent back to the SC to begin the disagreement review.

12. The SC must contact the person and/or family within one week (seven working days) of receiving the disagreement form to initiate the disagreement review. If the SC and the person and/or family disagree about the information on the PUNS form, attempts should be made to resolve the disagreement with the SC and then the SC supervisor. If agreement cannot be reached at these levels, the person and/or family should document this disagreement through the attached Disagreement Form which will be enclosed with the finalized HCSIS PUNS.

13. A County/Administrative Entity representative will make the final decision. The PUNS status cannot be appealed through the Bureau of Hearings and Appeals (BHA).