



**OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH  
AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
SERVICES BULLETIN**

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NUMBER:

OMHSAS-26-05

SUBJECT:

**Family Based Mental Health Services  
Training**

BY:

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**SCOPE:**

Family Based Mental Health Services (FBMHS) providers

Approved FBMHS training entities

County Behavioral Health Programs

Primary Contractors and Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations (BH-MCOs)

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this bulletin is to communicate an updated training curriculum for FBMHS providers, share the approval process and expectations to become an FBMHS training entity, and provide a listing of the current FBMHS training centers.

**BACKGROUND:**

Family Based Mental Health Services are intensive home and community-based services that utilize a clinical ecosystemic structural family therapy (ESFT) model originally developed by Marion Lindblad-Goldberg to further the structural family therapy work being done in Pennsylvania. FBMHS have been a critical part of the children's behavioral health service array since 1988.

An underlying assumption of ESFT, and therefore FBMHS, is that treatment should be approached in the context of the family and community, including understanding the child's functional needs in relationships within the family and in systems external to the family. This is a collaborative model in which co-therapists work in a strengths-based manner to build relationships and partner with anyone relevant to the child's treatment. ESFT strives to help the family identify and expand its natural supports and empower caregivers to assume

**COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:**

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leadership in guiding the family. There is an emphasis on promoting and transferring a range of skills to promote the child and family's positive development.

The approved FBMHS training entities have a primary role in teaching and clarifying the clinical model to FBMHS trainers. In coordination with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), the training entities ensure that FBMHS are provided in a manner consistent with the agreed-upon standards. This includes delivery and oversight of training, clinical and programmatic supervision, and model fidelity. This has resulted in the development of a two-pronged curriculum that has been in place since 2013. The curriculum focuses on teaching therapists and supervisors the concepts and methods of the ESFT clinical model, as well as teaching supervisors the concepts and methods of effective clinical supervision for the effective delivery of FBMHS.

## **DISCUSSION:**

OMHSAS is updating procedural changes related to training and clinical supervision in FBMHS, sharing the process to become a FBMHS training entity, the standards and expectations for FBMHS training entities, and the statewide list of FBMHS training entities. Consistent with the Pennsylvania Medicaid state plan, OMHSAS establishes the approval process for FBMHS trainers as well as the operational standards for the delivery of FBMHS.

### **FBMHS training adjustments**

Adjusting clinical training hours for FBMHS staff is needed to keep pace with evidence-based treatment standards and current behavioral health community practice standards. The minimum number of hours required to complete ESFT-FBMHS training has been reduced from 273 hours to 188 hours. Changes in training have shifted expectations regarding the minimum number of training hours required to complete model-adherent training. There is now less emphasis on training hours and more focus on assessing demonstrated competency in delivering evidence-based treatment models. Trainees are able to submit for their competency project at the end of their 188 hours. This change will not compromise the quality of learning staff receive since the curricula are designed to quickly support staff in learning essential content and skill development upon enrollment in FBMHS training.

This bulletin includes standardized measures to evaluate and certify FBMHS therapists based on competency rather than just knowledge assessment tests or training hours.

### **OMHSAS Approval Process for FBMHS training entities**

Attachment B outlines the approval process, responsibilities and expectations for FBMHS training entities.

A listing of approved FBMHS training entities can be found at, [Mental Health Licensing Related Resources | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)

## **SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS:**

This bulletin supersedes Policy Clarification 04-2012 *Updated Family Based Mental Health Services (FBMHS) Procedures* as it applies to the FBMHS training structure and hours.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A: Overview of FBMHS Provider Training

Attachment B: OMHSAS Approval Process for FBMHS Training Entities

## **ATTACHMENT A - Overview of FBMHS Provider Training**

1. The minimum number of hours required to complete the ESFT-FBMHS training is 188 hours. This results in a standard two-year training model of:
  - a. 18 hours of start-up/orientation in ESFT-FBMHS
  - b. 170 hours of core training in ESFT-FBMHS

Additional training is provided as determined by the training centers.

2. Training centers will use a standardized set of measures and procedures to assess competency in the application of ESFT-FBMHS. Graduation from the ESFT-FBMHS training is contingent on trainees passing established competency procedures.
  - a. Trainees are eligible to submit their competency project at the end of 188 hours of training. This allows for increased program flexibility in meeting staff learning and agency staffing needs.
  - b. To ensure quality preparation for all staff, the decision for a staff member to submit for competency is made jointly by the training center, agency supervisor (who determines staff readiness), and the staff member.
3. Staff who do not pass the established competency standards are required to continue their enrollment in ongoing ESFT-FBMHS training at the rate of 85 hours per year until they are able to pass the competency standards.
4. Additionally:
  - a. All FBMHS staff are expected to take the state FBMHS certification exam once they have completed the minimum training hours and passed competency standards to graduate from the core FBMHS training.
  - b. All graduates, supervisors and staff, complete 30 training hours annually.

## **Attachment B - OMHSAS Approval Process and Expectations for FBMHS Training Entities**

The Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) supports current efforts to further Family Based Mental Health Services (FBMHS) as an evidence-informed practice. To ensure FBMHS is consistently delivered in a way that supports the sustainability of the model and is consistent with its standards as a promising practice, the following criteria must be met:

### **Expectations and Responsibilities**

1. Any entity wanting to provide FBMHS training must submit a detailed training plan to OMHSAS for initial review and approval. FBMHS Trainers must submit subsequent training plans to RA-OMHSASTraining@pa.gov. The training plan must conform to current FBMHS expectations, including those in regulation, bulletin, and other OMHSAS instruction.
2. The FBMHS core curriculum must address all content currently covered by the PA Certification Board for the FBMHS exam which can be found at [FBT | Pennsylvania Certification Board](#)
3. Each FBMHS training center is responsible for ongoing review and analysis of its trainees' exam results. This includes taking appropriate action to address any supervisory needs, incongruencies, or concerns at both the individual and programmatic levels.
4. All FBMHS training centers, as part of their performance improvement process to assess treatment outcomes and effectiveness, will use common outcome measures that are approved by OMHSAS.
5. The FBMHS training centers will evaluate and share data with OMHSAS on the retention rates of FBMHS therapists and supervisors they have trained as requested by OMHSAS.
6. OMHSAS may issue an approval for a training center.

### **Minimum Staff Qualifications and Expectations**

Training centers are welcome to establish standards that exceed the minimums.

The director of training must have:

- a. A clinical master's degree
- b. Relevant professional licensure that is in good standing
- c. Passed the FBMHS exam
- d. 7 years of clinical experience in systemic family therapy
  - i. 3 of which are providing therapy in an intensive in-home service.

- ii. 3 of which are teaching or training individuals in ESFT or FBMHS.
- e. 2 years of experience in the evaluation and ongoing monitoring of research-supported clinical programs
- f. Competency and ongoing commitment to trauma-informed care principles and practices.
- g. Adherence to the FBMHS model

Training staff must have:

- a. A clinical master's degree
- b. Certification in FBMHS through the PA certification board, or a previous certification from OMHSAS
- c. 3 years of post-certification experience providing systemic family therapy
  - a. 1 of which is providing therapy in an intensive in-home service
  - b. 1 of which is in systemic family therapy supervision