

OM 002-2004 (5330) SENTRY PSYCHOLOGY ALERT FUNCTION,  
IMPLEMENTATION OF



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# Operations Memorandum

**OPI:** CPD/PSB  
**NUMBER:** 002-2004 (5330)  
**DATE:** 3/19/2004  
**SUBJECT:** Implementation of  
SENTRY Psychology  
Alert Function

**EXPIRATION DATE:** 3/19/2005

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1. **PURPOSE AND SCOPE.** Some inmates with substantial mental health concerns require extra care when their housing is changed or they are transferred. For this group of inmates that pose management concerns, a special protocol has been developed for staff. It is an enhanced tracking and monitoring system to ensure that when a decision to move the inmate occurs:

- any special psychological needs of the inmate are reviewed and considered by Psychology Services staff;
- any safety and security concerns are highlighted for non-Psychology Services staff.

2. **DIRECTIVES REFERENCED**

P5100.07 Security Designation and Custody Classification Manual (9/3/99)  
P5290.12 Intake Screening (3/16/99)  
P5310.12 Psychology Services Manual (8/13/93)  
P6000.05 Health Services Manual (9/15/96)

3. **APPLICATION.** This Operations Memorandum applies to all Bureau facilities, including pretrial, holdover, and Medical Centers, all community contract facilities and all privately managed contract prisons.

4. **DEFINITION AND KEY FACTOR**

- a. **Case Management Assignment (CMA) PSY ALERT.** The Case Management Assignment (CMA) of Psychology Alert

should be added when an inmate has substantial mental health concerns that require extra care, and/or the inmate has special psychological needs that pose management concerns.

- b. **Key Factor.** The inmate requires closer monitoring when a change in housing or a transfer occurs.
- c. **Chief Psychologist.** This term refers to the Chief Psychologist or designee.

5. **PSYCHOLOGY STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES.** The Chief Psychologist is responsible for tracking the SENTRY CMA of **PSY ALERT**. The Chief Psychologist monitors inmates with **PSY ALERT** assignments, and conveys management and mental health concerns (including when a **PSY ALERT** assignment entry is made or removed from SENTRY) as soon as practicable to appropriate unit team members and Health Services staff members. This includes applicable information found in the Psychology Data System (PDS) entry. Guidance on the **PSY ALERT** follows:

- a. Only a psychologist may enter or remove the CMA SENTRY assignment of **PSY ALERT**. In some cases, Central Office Psychology staff or the Regional Psychology Services Administrator may enter the **PSY ALERT** assignment.
- b. This assignment can be added or removed at any stage of an inmate's incarceration (e.g., pretrial detention, holdover facility, medical referral center, or designated facility).
- c. Suggestions on which inmates should have this assignment are included in the Guidelines for **Use of SENTRY Psychology Alert Assignment (Attachment A)**.
- d. A "**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**" section is also provided in this OM for additional guidance on implementation (see **Attachment B**).
- e. The Psychology Data System (PDS) is critical to this assignment. Therefore, Psychology Services staff will make an entry into PDS when this assignment is added or removed, or when additional concerns need to be documented.

- f. PDS entries should include, at a minimum:
- # the reason for adding or removing the assignment,
  - # any management and psychiatric concerns, and
  - # recommendations for follow up care.
- g. The Chief Psychologist should discuss Psychology Alert procedures briefly in Annual Training.
- h. Questions regarding implementation of the **PSY ALERT** assignment should be directed to the Regional Psychology Services Administrator.

## 6. PRIOR TO INITIAL DESIGNATION

### a. **Inmates in Pretrial Detention Status in Bureau Institutions.**

Psychology Services staff in pretrial detention institutions are often the first psychologist to have contact with inmates. Frequently, they have valuable mental health information to convey which may be beneficial when initial designation decisions are made. This is the first opportunity for psychology services to enter the **PSY ALERT** assignment.

- CMA
- (1) **Step One.** When the Chief Psychologist enters the assignment of **PSY ALERT**, it will be displayed on SENTRY (i.e, Inmate Profile).
- who
- (2) **Step Two.** The Community Corrections Manager (CCM), who loads initial designation data, should review whether the inmate has a **PSY ALERT** assignment on SENTRY.
- (3) **Step Three.** If the **PSY ALERT** assignment is present, CCMs are to enter Y (yes) in the OMDT REF item, and include in the remarks section "**PSYCH ALERT YES.**"
- (4) **Step Four.** When the OMDT receives the initial designation request, the designator will contact Central Office Psychology Services for additional review.

b. **Inmates Not in Pretrial Detention Institutions.**

Before initial designation, many inmates that may need the **PSY ALERT** assignment are housed in facilities other than Bureau pretrial detention institutions (e.g., housed in local jails). Then, the following procedures apply.

- (1) **Step One.** When the CCM receives mental health information on an inmate (either from the PSI, transporting officials, local jails, etc.), the CCM will continue to submit this information to the OMDT. Then, CCMs do **not** enter the CMA of **PSY ALERT** nor will they include "**PSYCH ALERT YES**" in the remarks section.

- (2) **Step Two.** After the OMDT review, Psychology Services will determine the need for a **PSY ALERT** based on the mental health information. If this assignment is added, the branch psychologist will enter the rationale in PDS (no PDS entry is necessary for study cases).

7. **INTAKE SCREENING.** When an inmate with a **PSY ALERT** assignment arrives at the Bureau institution or contract facility to which they have been designated, staff are to follow the steps below.

- a. **Step One.** The first task involves determining if the inmate can be released to general population. An inmate with a **PSY ALERT** assignment may not be released to general population until Psychology Services staff reviews and clears him or her.

■ The **Social Intake Screening Form** now includes a Psychology Alert prompt. When unit team staff see that **PSYCH ALERT: (YES)** is noted on the Social Intake Screening Form, they are to contact Psychology Services for clearance before placing the inmate in general population.

■ When contacted, psychology staff will conduct a face to face interview, and then determine the inmate's suitability for a general population unit. Psychology Services and unit team staff are to develop local procedures to clear inmates with a **PSY**

**ALERT** assignment (e.g., Psychology services provides written comments and signature on Social Intake Screening form, or sends a clearance memorandum to unit team via Groupwise, etc..).

- b. **Step Two.** Based on this interview, Psychology services staff will determine whether the **PSY ALERT** assignment should be removed.
- c. **Step Three.** While the inmate is at a designated institution, a Psychology Services representative will submit relevant information on an inmate with a **PSY ALERT** to unit team staff for:

- # initial classification,
- # program review meetings, and
- # pre-release planning.

Unit team staff will request Psychology Services input when the CMA assignment of **PSY ALERT** is displayed on the Program Review Report form.

- d. **Step Four.** The Chief of Psychology Services will monitor movement of inmates into SHU, to ensure inmates with **PSY ALERT** receive appropriate management and treatment.

**8. TRANSFER AND REDESIGNATION.** When a transfer is considered for an inmate with a **PSY ALERT** assignment, Psychology Services staff will evaluate his or her suitability for transfer and convey any management and mental health concerns to unit team staff.

- a. **Step One.** The Unit Manager or designee must notify the Chief Psychologist whenever a request for inmate movement is forthcoming on an inmate with a **PSY ALERT** assignment. The best time for communication on inmate movement is when program review meetings occur. Regardless, unit team prompting to psychology services should occur prior to submission of the inmate movement request, when possible.
- b. **Step Two.** When contacted by Unit Team staff about a proposed transfer of an inmate with a **PSY ALERT** assignment, the Chief Psychologist (or designee) must provide clearance regarding the proposed movement in writing via GroupWise.

In addition to clearance comments, this memorandum will contain information regarding the inmate's suitability for transfer and will convey any management and mental health concerns related to the inmate's designation and transfer (see the **Memorandum from Chief Psychologist to Unit Team Regarding Movement of Inmate with Psychology Alert Assignment (Attachment C)**). The Chief Psychologist will enter this memorandum into PDS, and note for the unit team whether it is FOI-Exempt.

**Inmates with a PSY ALERT assignment may require special accommodation with housing and transfers.**

- c. **Step Three.** The Unit Manager or designee will include the Chief Psychologist's remarks regarding the proposed movement in the medical section of the Request for Transfer/ Application of Management Variable form (EMS-409).
- d. **Step Four.** Before transfer, the Chief Psychologist must coordinate with Health Services staff to ensure

that relevant mental health information is conveyed on the Medical Record of Prisoners in Transit form (BP-149).

- Any necessary precautions, management concerns, and/or special needs that may affect transporting this inmate should be added to the BP-149. Some types of instructions to include are:
  - # potential to engage in self-harm,
  - # potential for disruptive behavior,
  - # level of cooperation regarding psychiatric or medical treatment, and/or
  - # the need for specific medications.

The In-transit Data form will reflect automatically that an inmate has a **PSY ALERT** assignment.

**9. HOLDOVER UNITS. Psychology Services, Unit Management, and Health Services staff should coordinate closely when inmates with a PSY ALERT assignment are housed in a holdover unit.**

- a. **Step One.** If an inmate is placed in a holdover unit, staff conducting the intake screening will notify Psychology Services staff of the inmate's arrival (each holdover institution should establish local procedures to identify whether unit staff or Health Services staff will notify Psychology Services when an inmate arrives that has a **PSY ALERT** assignment).
- b. **Step Two.** Once notified, the Chief Psychologist will:
  - # review the BP-149,
  - # conduct a face to face interview with the inmate, and
  - # provide to staff any recommendations, concerns, or restrictions pertaining to the arriving inmate's management.

The Health Services BP-149 form may need amending, based on this interview.

**10. TRANSITION, COMMUNITY-BASED PLACEMENT, AND POST-RELEASE SUPERVISION.** When an inmate is nearing release from Bureau custody (via community-based placement, direct release to U.S. Probation staff, or release to detaining officials), the Chief Psychologist must make a final determination about continuing

a SENTRY **PSY ALERT** assignment. This is a critical time since the assignment will remain with the inmate upon release.

- a. **Step One.** Unit team staff will circulate the **Medical/Psychological Evaluation for Transfer to a CCC Type Facility** (BP-351) when appropriate.
- b. **Step Two.** The Chief Psychologist will include remarks on the BP-351 for any inmate with a SENTRY **PSY ALERT** assignment.

c. **Step Three.** The Clinical Director or designee must also make remarks on the BP-351 for any inmate with a **PSY ALERT** assignment. These remarks should include, but are not limited to, information not already provided regarding:

- # special medical or psychiatric conditions or diagnoses,
- # all current medical and psychiatric medications, and
- # instructions regarding the need for follow-up care.

If psychiatric medications have been prescribed or recommended for the inmate, but he or she has been non-compliant or refuses to take medication, this should be noted specifically on the BP-351.

11. **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.** Study cases and transfers to and from Medical Referral Centers for psychiatric reasons are to have a **PSY ALERT** assignment. When necessary, the Regional Psychology Services Administrator must ensure the **PSY ALERT** assignment is entered for mentally ill inmates housed in contract facilities.

/s/Newton E. Kendig for  
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/s/  
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Division

## **GUIDELINES FOR USING THE SENTRY PSYCHOLOGY ALERT ASSIGNMENT**

Generally, the SENTRY **PSY ALERT** assignment is to be applied in special mental health cases that will likely pose management and security concerns for the institution when an inmate's housing is changed or when a transfer occurs. The guiding principle is that the continuum of care must be maintained.

Application of the SENTRY **PSY ALERT** assignment requires sound clinical judgment. The intent of this assignment is to ensure, if movement occurs, that all staff consider the special psychological and management-related risks associated with the inmate.

### **Examples of when Psychology Services Staff should apply the PSY ALERT assignment:**

**Example 1** - The inmate requires psychotropic medication for the management of psychotic symptoms, and has a recent history of being non-compliant with treatment.

**Example 2** - The inmate is at risk for self-harm when distressed.

**Example 3** - The inmate has a history of sexually predatory behavior that is recent and which occurred in an institution environment. Psychology Services staff have identified the offender to be a risk to staff and others.

### **Examples of when not to apply PSY ALERT assignment:**

**Example 1** - The inmate is involved in a psycho-educational group or individual counseling, and a transfer would result in mild or moderate adjustment problems.

**Example 2** - The inmate is receiving medication from a chronic care clinic for a moderate mental health disorder (anxiety or mild depression), and is compliant with medication orders.

**Example 3** - The inmate has a previous suicide attempt that is not recent and he or she is not currently dangerous to self or others.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. If the inmate is already designated to a Bureau institution on the date of this Operations Memorandum, can the Chief Psychologist enter the **PSY ALERT** assignment?

**(Yes)**- There are inmates already designated and housed in BOP facilities that may require the **PSY ALERT** assignment.

2. Is the **PSY ALERT** assignment intended to replace the MDS assignment of Mentally Ill?

**(No)** - The MDS assignment of **MEN ILL** was intended for a different purpose and has a specific definition. Although some inmates with the MDS assignment of **MEN ILL** are candidates for the **PSY ALERT** assignment, the focus of the **PSY ALERT** assignment is different. Accordingly, staff should not add a **PSY ALERT** assignment automatically for an inmate who has the MDS assignment of **MEN ILL**.

3. Can you provide an example of an inmate who would have had an **MDS MEN ILL** assignment but not a **PSY ALERT** assignment?

**(Yes)** - An inmate is diagnosed with Schizophrenia, is on medication for this disorder, and has complied with all treatment recommendations when transferred (no signs of disruptive behavior at all). He may have a **MEN ILL** assignment but not a **PSY ALERT** assignment.

4. One of the examples of when to add a **PSY ALERT** assignment includes a sex offender? Are all inmates that are sex offenders the target of the **PSY ALERT** assignment?

**(No)** - We are targeting only a small segment of the sex offender population. **SENTRY PSY ALERT** is intended for staff to better track sex offenders whose predatory sexual behavior occurred during incarceration and who pose a risk to staff and inmates. Tracking mechanisms are already in place for other types of sex offenders (see the Public Safety Factor definition for Sex Offender).

5. The definition and examples for Psychology Alert seem to give the Chief Psychologist some discretion on when to apply or not apply the **PSY ALERT** assignment? Why?

This policy provides guidelines (only) for Psychology Services staff on when to apply **PSY ALERT**. It was intentional that the **PSY ALERT** assignment was not defined by AXIS level disorders contained in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual. It is expected that sound clinical judgment will be used for this assignment.

6. What is meant by "**continuity of care**?"

For this Operations Memorandum, "continuity of care" is a generic term. It is much more than simply having BOP psychologists communicate mental health information. "Continuity of Care" also means ensuring that those staff outside psychology services are aware that an inmate has special psychological needs, and that his or her movement requires special precautions.

7. If the inmate has a **PSY ALERT** assignment when he or she leaves Bureau custody, will it remain in SENTRY?

**(Yes)** - The SENTRY **PSY ALERT** assignment will remain with the inmate on SENTRY after he or she leaves Bureau custody. This approach will allow U.S. Probation Officials to identify these inmates while on Supervised Release. Additionally, the assignment remains with the inmate if he or she returns to Bureau custody.

8. Can an inmate be placed in a minimum security facility with a **PSY ALERT** assignment?

**(Yes)** - However, when an inmate is being considered for transfer to a camp, the Chief Psychologist should evaluate very carefully whether the SENTRY **PSY ALERT** is still needed. This is because the local jail may be used as the Special Housing Unit, and additionally, there are resource limitations consistent with a mission of lesser security.

9. Does the **PSY ALERT** mean that "Review Psych on Arrival" is no longer necessary?

(Yes)- All inmates with a **PSY ALERT** cannot be released to a general population unit without clearance by psychology services staff. This was the purpose of the Review Psych on Arrival, which will no longer be necessary.

10. When an inmate is scheduled for transfer, should the Chief Psychologist make comments on the In-Transit Data form that the unit team prepares, or the **Medical Record of Prisoners In Transit Form**, or both?.

The unit team may want to include comments on the In-Transit Data form since the **PSY ALERT** will be conveyed on the form. Psychology Services staff should provide them with any helpful information when requested. However, in all **PSY ALERT** cases, information from psychology services must be included on the **Medical Record of Prisoners In Transit Form**. Health Services and Psychology should develop systems of control so that this can be accomplished before an inmate with a **SENTRY PSY ALERT** transfers.

11. Is the Psychology Data System important to the **PSY ALERT** assignment?

(Yes) - Justifications for inclusion or removal of this assignment should always be made in PDS. Staff are to make the entry in the category "**PSYCH ALERT**". More specifically, the body of the PDS notation must include:

- 1) justification for addition or deletion of **PSY ALERT**;
- 2) Concerns or precautions regarding housing and movement (if any); and,
- 3) Recommendations for follow-up (if necessary).

However, **OMDT staff who designate study cases are not required to make an entry in PDS.**

12. What happens if an inmate is housed in holdover short-term (e.g. overnight) and has a **PSY ALERT** assignment?

It may not be feasible for Psychology Services staff to meet with the inmate. Then, medical personnel should review the records and note any concerns (if any) on the **Medical Record of Prisoners In Transit Form**.

13. Should Psychology Services staff develop local systems of control to know when inmates are arriving and departing their facility?

**(Yes)** - If not already in place, Psychology Services staff should develop local systems of control with the CMC, ISM and/or unit team staff to ensure they are notified when a busload is arriving or leaving.

14. The policy states that Psychology Services staff must conduct a face to face interview before clearance of the inmate to a general population unit. What happens when an inmate arrives on a bus after-hours?

Inmates with a SENTRY **PSY ALERT** assignment must always have a face to face interview with Psychology Services staff before release to a general population unit.

**MEMORANDUM FROM CHIEF PSYCHOLOGIST TO UNIT  
TEAM REGARDING MOVEMENT OF INMATE WITH  
PSYCHOLOGY ALERT ASSIGNMENT**

**(Include the following in memorandum)**

**I. Reason for SENTRY PSY ALERT assignment  
(diagnosis or presenting problem)**

**II. Current mental health treatment**

**III. Suitability for transfer**

**IV. Treatment recommendations that might be relevant  
to the designation process**