



OKLAHOMA Mental Health & Substance Abuse

Guidance for Reporting Critical Incidents and Sentinel Events

for all certified providers

What is included in the Department's definition of critical incident?

Critical incidents include anything that occurs at the service setting or during the delivery of services that creates risk of harm or results in harm to consumers, staff, or visitors. The full definition is provided below:

"Critical incident" means an occurrence or set of events inconsistent with the routine operations of a facility, service setting, or otherwise routine care of a consumer. Critical incidents specifically include, but are not necessarily limited to the following: adverse drug events; self-destructive behavior; deaths and injuries to consumers, staff, and visitor; medication errors; residential consumers that have absent without leave (AWOL); neglect or abuse of a consumer; fire; unauthorized disclosure of information; damage to or theft of property belonging to consumers or the facility; other unexpected occurrences; or events potentially subject to litigation. A critical incident may involve multiple individuals or results.

Outpatient Facilities

Incidents that occur at the facility or during the provision of off-site services must be reported. With the exception of sentinel events (see next page), outpatient facilities as a general rule do not have to report incidents that did not occur at the facility or that did not occur during the delivery of services off-site.

However, we ask providers to use their judgment in reporting critical incidents that involve consumers or staff in these circumstances, but are nonetheless significant. For instance, a theft that occurred at an active consumer's home when services were not being provided would not need to be reported.

However, if the provider discovered that a former staff person had committed the theft, we would encourage the provider to report the incident.

Residential, Crisis, and Inpatient Facilities

With the exception of sentinel events (see next page), residential, crisis, and inpatient facilities need only to report critical incidents that occur at the facility or anywhere services are provided from the point of admission until the point of discharge. If incidents outside of these circumstances occur, we ask the provider to use judgment and report those incidents that are significant.

What is included in the Department's definition of a sentinel event?

Sentinel events are a type of critical incident that includes occurrences that create the risk of or result in serious injury or death of a consumer, staff member, or visitor. The full definition is provided below:

"Sentinel event" means a type of critical incident that is an unexpected occurrence involving the death or serious physical or psychological injury to a consumer, staff member, or visitor, or risk thereof. Serious injury specifically includes loss of limb or function. The phrase "or risk thereof" includes a variation in approved processes which could carry a significant chance of a serious adverse outcome to a consumer. These events take place in the facility and/or occur during the delivery of services and signal the need for immediate investigation and response. Sentinel events include, but are not limited to, suicide, homicide, assault and other forms of violence, including domestic violence or sexual assault, and adverse drug events resulting in serious injury or death. Sentinel events include occurrences that take place at the facility and/or during the delivery of services, as well as suicide and unintentional drug overdose deaths that occur at any time while an outpatient consumer is an active consumer and within seventy-two (72) hours of discharge from inpatient and residential settings, including sites certified under Chapter 23 of this Title.

Outpatient Facilities

In addition to any sentinel events that occur at the facility or during the delivery of services, outpatient facilities must report any death by suicide and any unintentional overdose death of an active consumer. An active consumer is a consumer who has an open chart.

Residential, Crisis, and Inpatient Facilities

In addition to any events that occur at the facility or during the delivery of services, inpatient, crisis, and residential facilities must also report any consumer deaths by suicide and unintentional overdose deaths of any consumer that occur within 72 hours after discharge.

When do I need to report critical incidents and sentinel events?

Effective September 15, 2022 critical incidents, with the exception of sentinel events, are required to be reported within 72 hours (as opposed to 24 hours). Sentinel events must still be reported within 24 hours.

NOTE: While only certain events are required to be reported to ODMHSAS, all clinically significant occurrences should be documented in the clinical record.

To report a critical incident to ODMHSAS, please fax to 405.248.9325.