

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY  
Behavioral Health Services**

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURE MANUAL**

**Subject: Mobile Emergency Response Team (MERT)    Policy Number: 2206**

**Date Effective: 12/6/2017**

**Pages: 3**

**Date Revised:**

**Responsible for Updating:  
MERT Manager**

**Approval:**

  
Behavioral Health Director

12-6-17  
Date

**POLICY:**

Santa Cruz County Behavioral Health shall provide 5 day a week field based or walk-in crisis intervention services during business hours for all residents of Santa Cruz County. These services shall be provided in-person by Mobile Emergency Response Team Clinicians after a brief screening by Access Triage worker and/or MERT clinician.

**PURPOSE:**

To ensure that all residents receive appropriate mandated crisis intervention and referral services that meet their treatment needs. In addition is the goal to safely treat individuals in the least restrictive setting.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**1. Resident**

For the purposes of MERT, a resident is defined as someone who is in Santa Cruz County at the time of the crisis event.

**2. 5150 Involuntary 72 Hour Psychiatric Evaluation**

California State Welfare & Institutions Code (WIC) 5150 – statute that places a person on an involuntary hold for psychiatric evaluation. If it is suspected that a person, as a result of a mental disorder, is either gravely disabled, a danger to self, or danger to others, he/she/they may be placed on a “5150 Hold” pending an assessment. This is similar to WIC 5585 for minors. (see #2 below)

## **PROCEDURES:**

### **1. MERT Functions**

MERT provides 5 day a week field based or walk-in crisis intervention services during business hours for all residents of Santa Cruz County. These services shall be provided in-person by Mobile Emergency Response Team Clinicians after a brief screening by Access Triage worker and/or MERT clinician to determine appropriateness. Services include crisis consultation, crisis evaluation, psychiatric hospital evaluation, treatment information, and referral assistance. MERT clinicians can also provide short term stabilization and case management services as needed. MERT clinicians have the authority to write and remove a 5150 hold after an assessment.

### **2. Criteria for Involuntary Detention & Treatment**

Statutory Requirements:

In order to meet the statutory requirements for an involuntary detention (WIC 5150), a person must meet one or more of the following criteria. As a result of a mental disorder, the person presents as one or more of the following:

A danger to himself/herself;

A danger to others; or

Gravely disabled.

- a) **Danger to Self** - Danger to self typically means the presence of suicidal thought, statements and behaviors (suicide attempts or gestures) associated with the mental disorders: depression, intoxication or global confusion.
- b) **Danger to Others** - Dangerousness to others often involves verbalizations or actions that are easily interpreted as aggressive and usually involve poor impulse control. It is frequently associated with emotional distress of a situational nature, but occasionally, there is a long-standing thought disorder of a persecutory nature.
- c) **Gravely Disabled**- A gravely disabled person is a person who, as a result of a mental disorder, is unable to use the elements of life which are essential to health, safety, and development, including food, clothing, and shelter.
- d) **Gravely Disabled Minor** - A 'gravely disabled' minor is a minor who, as a result of a mental disorder, is unable to use the elements of life which are essential to health, safety and development, including food, clothing and shelter, even though provided to the minor by others.

### **3. MERT Process**

#### **a. Initial Call**

MERT staff are notified via the (800) 952-2335 Access Line of a need to respond to a crisis event.

**b. MERT Response**

MERT clinicians respond to a call in a timely manner (not more than 15 minutes), either by phone or in person to determine whether an assessment is needed.

**c. Assessments**

MERT clinicians conduct in-person assessments of individuals who present at Santa Cruz County Behavioral Health, emergency rooms, schools, clinics, or elsewhere in the community to determine whether psychiatric hospitalization is needed or not. Field assessments should be vetted for clinician safety and law-enforcement or mental Health Liaisons accessed as needed for support.

**d. Contact with Adjunct Service Providers**

MERT clinicians shall consult and/or include existing adjunct service providers in assessing and providing exchange of relevant information regarding immediate and continued care of persons contacted in a crisis situation.

**e. Management Support**

MERT clinicians are consistently supported by a licensed clinician who serves as back-up clinical support for any concerns that may arise during a crisis response.

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**PRIOR VERSIONS:** 1/12/2009 and replaces Policies 2451 (3/13/09); 2452 (3/13/09); 2453 (3/13/09); 2454 (3/13/09); 2455 (6/28/04); 2456 (3/13/09)

**REFERENCES:** WIC 5150, WIC 5585

**FORMS/ATTACHMENTS:**