



Monterey County Behavioral Health Electronic Communication Consent

Monterey County Behavioral Health and its contracted providers utilize electronic communication (secure text message, email) to help individuals access and stay engaged with behavioral healthcare while living in their communities, and to provide individuals with timely access to specialty mental health and substance use disorder services. Secure text message and email involve the use of written communication; they are not instantaneous and may have a delay between when the communication is sent and when it is received.

The following notice to the person in care is a review the potential limitations and risk and outlines the expectations and responsibilities associated with these forms of communication.

- Electronic communication is voluntary. If persons in care choose to receive communication electronically and change their mind at any time during their treatment, they may withdraw their consent by letting their provider know. The person in care will still have access to Medi-Cal covered services.
- Staff will use a county/provider-issued or approved device when communicating with persons in care.
- Clinical or treatment information should be reserved for discussion in session and/or through secure telecommunication methods. However secure text messaging and email communications may be used and should be limited to the following:
 - Scheduling logistics: this includes but is not limited to gathering information regarding person in care's availability for appointments, arranging appointments, and confirming appointments.
 - Notifications or reminders: this includes but is not limited to notifications about upcoming appointments or groups, links to material for persons in care to review or complete, and reminders such as completing lab work in preparation for a scheduled appointment.
- Secure text messaging or email should not be used for emergency or urgent situations. Staff should discuss how to best access support after normal business hours or during any emergency or urgent situation.
- Staff shall inform the person in care of their working hours and that they will not be checking or responding to emails or secure text messages outside of those hours.
- County/provider-approved secure text messaging platform is the only option for texting. Phone applications for texting, FaceTime, and voicemail are not generally encrypted and may not protect personal information.
- There are risks inherent to secure text message and email communication, including:
 - Emails and secure text message information can be circulated, forwarded, and stored in numerous ways and locations.
 - Email or secure text senders can easily misaddress an email or text, causing the information to be seen by unintended recipients.
 - Email and/or secure text is easier to falsify than handwritten or signed documents.

- Backup copies of emails or secure text may exist even after the sender or the recipient has deleted his or her copy.
- Employers and on-line services have a right to archive and inspect emails and/or text transmitted through their systems.
- Emails and secure text messages can be intercepted, altered, forwarded, or used without authorization or detection.
- Email and/or secure text can be used to introduce viruses into computer systems.
- Due to the less secure nature of email/text communications, Monterey County Behavioral Health and its contracted providers will limit clinical/medical information to the minimum necessary when communicating with you using these methods.
- Email and/or secure text messaging will never be used for diagnostic purposes and requests to be assessed through either method will not be honored.
- The ability to use email and/or secure text messaging may be terminated by staff at any point in which these are not the most appropriate means of communication.
- Any exchange of inappropriate or explicit material via email or text with staff is prohibited and will result in the termination of that communication method.
- Any unauthorized use of email or secure text messaging should be reported to staff as soon as possible.
- All existing confidentiality protections under federal and California law apply to secure text message and email communication as well.

After a review of this information, (Person In Care)

Consents (check all that apply): Text Email Fax

Does Not Consent (check all that apply): Text Email Fax

to participating in electronic communication with their treatment providers.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Authorized representative, if different than the person in care: _____

Relationship to Person In Care: _____

Offered a copy: Yes No