

SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH SYSTEM  
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES

DATE: February 1, 2000

BHRS POLICY: 01-01

SUBJECT: Cell Phone Usage

AUTHORITY: Departmental; Divisional; San Mateo County Policies

AMENDED: January 13, 2017; Tech Edits 3/29/17, 9/26/17; Attachment C added 3/29/17; Attachments D and E added 9/26/17

ATTACHMENT: A. Client Acknowledgment  
B. Cell Phone Voicemail Greeting Script  
C. Spanish Client Acknowledgment  
D. Chinese Client Acknowledgment  
E. Tagalog Client Acknowledgment

PURPOSE:

This policy is intended to establish general guidelines for the clinically appropriate use of cell phones and to provide guidelines for all San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) staff and workforce members (hereafter “staff”) regarding the use of County issued or personal cell phones. The use of a cell phone by clinical staff in the field can be an important component in a staff/client safety plan.

POLICY:

Any staff person using a cell phone for County business is required to review and follow all relevant BHRS privacy and confidentiality policies available at the BHRS policy website: <http://www.smchealth.org/behavioral-health-staff-forms-policies>

In addition, the following County-wide policies must also be adhered to:

- Mobile Technology Use Policy – San Mateo County Manager Administrative Memo B-19
- Information Technology Security Policy (ISD)
- Portable Computing Policy (ISD)

Obtaining a County Cell Phone

1. Read the required policies listed above.

2. Obtain Supervisor or Manager Approval.
3. Sign the Health System County Issued Mobile Device Policy.
4. Complete and sign the Admin Memo B-19 form and e-mail the completed form directly to the IT Manager (the IT Manager will submit the form to ISD for processing).
5. ISD will contact the user directly for issuance.

#### Availability of County Cell Phones

- County issued cell phones shall be available at all clinical sites and for all clinical teams that provide community based services whenever possible.
- Managers or supervisors of individual sites/teams shall establish cell phone usage priorities and make this information available to all staff.
- Staff responding to a crisis call or potential 5150 situation in the community shall have priority for the use of a site cell phone.
- Any shared phone will be secured when not in use and each unit will establish a sign in/sign out procedure.

#### Unit Supervisor's Responsibility

- Supervisors are responsible for educating their staff about appropriate cell phone use to ensure their understanding of the policies and to set the clear expectation that any concerns must be immediately brought to the supervisor's attention.
- If inappropriate use of a cell phone occurs the supervisor will ensure that an incident report is completed and turned into BHRS Quality Management (QM).

#### Cell Phone Use for County Business

- Cell phone usage is intended to provide immediate phone accessibility to the clinic, to PES or to 911 in the event of emergencies.
- Cell phones may be used to obtain addresses, check on client availability, confirm appointments, and leave important messages with the team/clinic about changes in plans or the clinician's location.
- County staff using the phone will set the outgoing voicemail greeting to state that this is a work phone and is only available during the employee's work schedule, which will be included in the voicemail message. This will be updated to reflect time away and state that the phone will be off during those times. Voicemail messages will give instructions for whom to contact in an emergency, both during and after hours. (See attachments)
- Staff will turn off the phone during non-working time and keep it in a secure location.
- Prior to giving a client your cell phone number you are required to have a conversation covering the content in Attachment A and document this in a progress note, along with having the client sign Attachment A as described below.
- Clients are required to sign Attachment A that states they understand the phone will only be available during working hours and for the clinician to provide, in writing, the alternate numbers to call in an emergency for both working hours and after hours. If a client declines to sign the document they will not be given the staff cell phone number. The agreement clarifies that neither calls nor texts will be picked up or answered when the clinician is not working.

- Texting with clients is discouraged, however, when it does occur, no Protected Health Information (PHI) is to be disclosed. The primary function of texting is limited to appointment confirmation and logistics.
- If a client texts clinical/protected health information (PHI) or requests help with a specific clinical issue, the staff person will not reply by text but will call the client to discuss the issue raised and ask that the client not text clinical information in the future.
- Staff should not disclose PHI in any text message, including with County staff or any other colleagues. However, texting can be used to alert someone that there is an urgent situation that needs a discussion.
- Any disclosure of PHI should be done by phone from a private location or in person, or in a secured County email, via Avatar, or in an encrypted email to outside providers with proper releases.
- It is not recommended that routine voicemail messages be forwarded to the cell phone.

#### Assigned Cell Phones

- On occasion, an individual staff member may be assigned a County cell phone when it is established that cell phone usage, as defined in this policy, is an integral part of his/her routine work assignment.
- Staff members typically assigned a County cell phone include those working in units with 24/7 on-call responsibilities and staff assigned to field-based or intensive in-home treatment programs.
- The Unit Chief/Supervisor is responsible for recommending and assuring ongoing necessity for the specific assignment of a cell phone for the routine work needs of a staff member.

#### Personal Cell Phones

- **Absolutely no personal cell phones may be used to text clients. Staff must never give clients their personal cell phone number. If using your personal cell phone to call a client you must use call blocking. Any violation of this rule may result in progressive disciplinary action.**

#### Safety

- All staff are required to follow all county policies regarding safe cell phone usage while driving. (See page one of this policy and the County website.)

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ *(Signature on File)*  
 Stephen Kaplan, LCSW  
 BHRS Director