

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT TEXTING AND EMAIL**

As a client of Mono County Behavioral Health (MCBH) you may request that we communicate with you by text (SMS) or electronic mail (email). It is also your right to be informed in sufficient detail about the risks of communicating via text and email and how we will use and disclose texts and email to and from our patients (clients).

### **PLEASE READ THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY**

- MCBH and its supporting clinicians will make all efforts to utilize protection processes that minimize unauthorized disclosure of PHI, however, with an authorization of PHI release, the client must acknowledge and accept the responsibility of unauthorized disclosure or release of PHI and also hold the County harmless should unauthorized disclosure or release of a text or email containing PHI occur.
- Texts and email communications are two-way communications. However, responses and replies to texts and emails may be hours or days apart. This could result in a delay in receiving treatment. If client has an important, urgent or emergency situation, client should not rely solely on a text or email to request assistance or to describe the important, urgent or emergency situation. Use the telephone and call instead. In an emergency, clients should seek immediate assistance by dialing 911.
- Email and text messages on computers and/or phones or other devices have certain privacy risks, especially when phone or email access is provided through an employer or when access to messages is not password protected.
- Unencrypted email provides as much privacy as a postcard. If encryption is not available to you, consider taking the minimum precaution of conveying any sensitive or personal information by means of a password-protected attachment to an email communication.
- MCBH will not communicate health information that is identifiable as information that is specially protected under state or federal law (i.e., HIV/AIDS information or substance abuse treatment information) via email or text even if client has given permission to do so.
- Email or text messages may be inadvertently missed or misdirected. To minimize this risk, MCBH will ask that you respond appropriately to a “test” text or email message before MCBH will allow health or other confidential information about you to be communicated via text or email. You can also help minimize this risk by using only the text number or email address you are given at the successful conclusion of the test to communicate with MCBH.

- Email or text messages are sent at the touch of a button. Once sent, an email or text message cannot be recalled or canceled. Errors in transmission, regardless of the sender's caution, may occur.
- In the event the individual you have requested and authorized to communicate with via text or email is unexpectedly absent, ill, or otherwise unable to respond, individuals at MCBH other than the individual you identify in your Request may need to read your text or email message in order to process and respond to your text or email. It is important to know that your text or email message is not a private communication between you and your clinician or other individual you identified in your Request.
- Absent the facial expressions and/or nuances of vocal tone that a face-to-face or phone conversation provides, email or text can easily be misinterpreted.
- At your clinician's discretion, your email messages and text messages and any and all responses to them may become part of your medical record.