

MILWAUKEE COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIVISION

**GENERAL CONFIDENTIALITY STANDARDS**

In a healthcare facility, you are linked with a medical environment that sets high ethical standards of conduct. You are entrusted with confidential records and data, or may overhear information of a confidential nature. Even the name of a patient admitted to the Behavioral Health Division (BHD) is considered confidential and should not be discussed with anyone as a matter of casual conversation.

Medical records are clinical/legal documents and must be treated as confidential materials to be protected for the welfare of the patient and the facility whether information learned of verbally, stored in hard copy, or on computer. There are definite rules and guidelines governed by state and federal statutes and hospital policy regarding the release of medical record information. In most cases, written consent of the patient must be obtained. All requests and matters regarding release of medical record information (unless previous permission has been granted) are to be handled by the Medical Record Department, Room 1025. Requests for any medical record information received in other areas/departments of the Division should be forwarded to the Medical Record Department. All questions about record access should also be directed to the Medical Record Department.

You share in the responsibility to uphold the Confidentiality Standards as you become aware of any type of confidential information (verbal, written, or computerized) regarding a patient's hospitalization. It is expected that you will conduct yourself in a manner that demonstrates to staff, and to patients and visitors, that this facility is one in which the confidentiality of hospital records and patient's information and dignity are fully respected. Patient information is only to be discussed with fellow employees who are providing direct services to the patient and/or as necessary in the performance of their jobs. Your obligation to our patients is to ensure that the patient's right to privacy is not violated by the improper release of confidential information.

You are retained at the Behavioral Health Division on the assurance that you will observe the confidentiality standards stated here and will follow all BHD confidentiality policies and procedures. Further, under Civil Service Rules – Rule VII Separations; Suspensions – (aa) – it lists: "Unauthorized obtaining or disclosure of confidential or privileged information." Chapter 51.61(1)(n) of the Wisconsin Mental Health Act identifies a patient's "right to confidentiality of treatment records" and states that violation of these rights may result in legal action.

The patient may recover damages from any violation of Wisconsin Statutes 51.30, 51.61(1)(n), or 42 CFR and 45 CFR (HIPAA) of the Federal Regulations.

I have read the above, understand my responsibility in treating medical record and other patient information as confidential whether discussed verbally, stored in hard copy, or on computer, and agree to abide by these confidentiality standards.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SEND TO BHD HUMAN RESOURCE  
OFFICE for personnel file**