

SHIAWASSEE COUNTY COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY
POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

Section: Recipient Rights
Policy Number: 9
Subject: **Communications by Mail, Telephone,
and Visits**

Effective Date: 2/24/97
Last Revision Date: 4/2/09
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Policy

It shall be the policy of the Shiawassee County Community Mental Health Authority (SCCMHA) that any recipient residing in a Board-sponsored living arrangement or receiving inpatient services from a facility under contract with the Board is entitled to unimpeded, private, and uncensored communication with others by mail and telephone and to visit with persons of his or her choice (space will be made available for visits), except in circumstances and under conditions set forth in this policy.

Purpose

To ensure the protection of rights of recipients of the SCCMHA and to ensure compliance with the Michigan Mental Health Code and Michigan Department of Community Health Administrative Rules.

Application

This policy applies to all employees, independent contractors, and contract agencies of the SCCMHA.

Standards

- A. Any agency under the authority of this policy shall make telephones easily and readily accessible to recipients receiving its services. Funds for telephone use are available in reasonable amounts.
- B. Any agency under the authority of this policy shall ensure that correspondence can be confidentially received and mailed. Writing materials and postage are provided in reasonable amounts.
- C. Any limitation on a recipient's right to communicate by mail or telephone or to have visitors shall be documented in the recipient's plan of service. Such documentation shall include the justification for the limitation and the date of its expiration.
- D. A recipient in a Board-sponsored living arrangement or in an inpatient facility under contract with the Board shall be provided in writing and posted in the facility rules regarding:

1. Daily distribution of mail.
 2. Non-letterhead stationary, envelopes, postage, and pens or pencils, upon request.
 3. Access to a postal box or daily pickup and deposit of mail.
 4. Telephones for incoming calls during hours established by the agency and provided in writing to the recipient or guardian as necessary.
 5. Public or agency telephones for outgoing calls during hours established by the agency and provided in writing to the recipient and guardian as necessary.
 6. Regular visiting hours scheduled to be least disruptive to normal treatment activity and provided in writing to the recipient and guardian if necessary.
- E. A recipient's mail shall not be opened unless the recipient, or as applicable, the recipient's parent or guardian has consented that an article of mail may be opened by a designated person, or there is reasonable belief that an article or articles of mail violate a limitation. Outgoing mail shall not be opened or destroyed without written consent of the recipient or, as applicable, the recipient's parent or guardian. Instances of opening or destruction of mail by staff shall be documented in the recipient's record.
- F. A recipient's communication, in any form, with a private physician, mental health professional, court, recipient's attorney, or other person when such communication involves matters which are or may be the subject of any legal inquiry shall not be limited.
- G. Non-emergency visits to a recipient by a private physician or a mental health professional may be limited to reasonable times. A time is reasonable if a visit does not seriously tax the effective functioning of the residence or facility in which the recipient is receiving service.
- H. All limitations under this policy require the approval of the Chief Executive Officer and the following criteria shall be met:
1. A limitation shall be imposed only to the minimum degree necessary for achieving the intended purpose of the limitation, and
 2. A limitation is supported by documentation which establishes a) reasons justifying the limitation; b) significant evidence supporting the expected

