

Effective Date: 10/10/2025

Applies to: Mackay Behavioral Health Services, LLC and its providers, operating in the State of Maryland

Purpose

This policy outlines how Mackay Behavioral utilizes text messaging (SMS) to communicate with patients, protecting their privacy in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and applicable Maryland state privacy laws.

Use of SMS/Text Messaging

Mackay Behavioral may use text messaging (SMS) to:

Send appointment reminders or confirmations

Notify you of scheduling changes or office closures

Share billing or administrative information

Provide brief check-ins or general updates (if agreed upon)

We do not use standard text messaging to communicate detailed clinical information or sensitive health data.

Patient Consent

Text messaging is optional and used only with your explicit consent.

You must opt in before receiving any SMS messages.

You may opt out at any time by replying "STOP" or contacting our office.

By opting in, you acknowledge that text messaging is not a fully secure method of communication and that there are potential risks of unauthorized access or disclosure.

HIPAA Compliance and Security

Mackay Behavioral follows HIPAA privacy and security standards to protect all patient information. However, standard SMS technology is not encrypted, and we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information sent via text.

To maintain privacy:

We limit SMS content to non-clinical and administrative information only.

Sensitive or identifiable health information is shared only through secure, encrypted platforms or during direct communication with your provider.

All staff who send or receive texts on behalf of the practice use secure, password-protected devices with screen locks and remote-wipe capabilities.

Alternatives to SMS

If you prefer not to receive text messages, we are happy to communicate via secure phone calls, encrypted email (when available), or through our electronic health record's patient portal.

Maryland Privacy Law Compliance

In accordance with Maryland's Confidentiality of Medical Records Act (MCMRA) and related mental health privacy regulations, we take additional precautions to ensure that any identifiable patient information is protected against unauthorized use or disclosure.

Emergency Communication

Text messaging should not be used for urgent or emergency concerns.

If you are experiencing a medical or psychiatric emergency, call 911 or 988 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline), or go to your nearest emergency department.

Policy Updates

This policy may be updated periodically to reflect changes in technology, state law, or HIPAA regulations. The most current version will always be available on our website or upon request.