Up-To-The-Minute Notice to Substance Use (SU) Treatment Providers

We received the following important information from the Contra Costa Health Services Privacy and Compliance Officer and via the Behavioral Health Quality Assurance team.

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued additional guidance reminding covered health care providers that the HIPAA Privacy Rule does not permit them to give media and film crews access to facilities where patients’ Protected Health Information (PHI) will be accessible without the patients’ prior authorization.

The guidance explains that even during the current COVID-19 public health emergency, covered health care providers are still required to obtain a valid HIPAA authorization from each patient whose PHI will be accessible to the media before the media is given access to that PHI. The guidance clarifies that masking or obscuring patients’ faces or identifying information before broadcasting a recording of a patient is not sufficient, as a valid HIPAA authorization is still required before giving the media such access. Additionally, the guidance describes reasonable safeguards that should be used to protect the privacy of patients whenever the media is granted access to facilities.

“The last thing hospital patients need to worry about during the COVID-19 crisis is a film crew walking around their bed shooting ‘B-roll,’” said Roger Severino, OCR Director. “Hospitals and health care providers must get authorization from patients before giving the media access to their medical information; obscuring faces after the fact just doesn’t cut it,” Severino added.

The guidance may be found at https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/guidance-on-media-and-film-crews-access-to-phi.pdf.

Temporary Digital Signatures to Process Contracts and Invoices

The Office of the County Administrator has issued a temporary policy on the use of digital signatures and scanned signatures to facilitate business transactions between County departments and contractors, in order to prevent service disruption, while the County and State emergency proclamations are in effect. This policy applies to contracts and invoices. Stay tuned! More information to follow as we process your demands and contracts.
Drive Through for COVID-19 Testing for asymptomatic patients entering Withdrawal Management (WM) services launched on April 30th, 2020. Asymptomatic patients are eligible for testing if they are expected to enter Substance Use Detox facilities within the next 72 hours. Rapid tests will be conducted so results are available within 24-48 hours. Due to the success of the first phase, on May 7th Drive Through for COVID-19 Testing for asymptomatic patients entering Residential Treatment was activated by all Bi-Bett programs. Both Fatima and Mark are available to discuss the individual needs of residential providers if interested in participating in the Drive Through COVID-19 Testing initiative. To support a successful implementation, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was distributed by AOD staff.

Thank you to our County Health Officers, AODS and SUD treatment providers who advocated for this opportunity for clients in need of Substance Use Disorder services!

Building on the success of testing asymptomatic clients entering WM and SUD residential, the Medical Team in the Jail has approved Tuesday May 19, as the start day to begin COVID-19 testing for clients scheduled for released and entering SUD treatment. The AODS point person to trigger testing is our Substance Abuse Counselor Lakiesha Jones. For any questions, please contact Fatima Matal Sol at: (925) 335-3307 or Fatima.MatalSol@cchealth.org

Please visit the following link to Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) COVID-19 FAQ page. https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/frequently-asked-questions
This is a helpful resource for understanding Public Health Orders as they are issued.

The main CCHS Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) site is regularly updated and can be accessed at: https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/