

Informed Consent for the Use of Email

Samaritan clients who wish to communicate with their therapist and/or administrative staff using email are welcome to do so. However, there are a number of privacy concerns and potential risk factors that should be considered before transmitting confidential information by email.

General concerns include: email is immediately broadcast worldwide and can be received by unintended recipients; email messages can be forwarded without the sender's or intended recipient's permission or knowledge; email can easily be misaddressed; back-up copies of emails may exist after the sender or the recipient has deleted them; and email is easier to falsify than documents that are signed and sent by regular mail.

Privacy concerns related to a one's personal health information also need to be considered. It is the policy of Samaritan to make all email messages concerning diagnosis and/or treatment part of that client's medical record and to treat these with the same degree of confidentiality as other portions of the medical record. (Please see your therapist's disclosure statement for details.) Samaritan takes all reasonable means to protect clients' confidentiality but cannot guarantee the security and confidentiality of email communication. Please read the following information outlining Samaritan's conditions for the use of email.

- Samaritan Center of Puget Sound cannot guarantee that electronic communications will be private. Samaritan takes reasonable steps to protect confidentiality but is not liable for improper disclosure of confidential information not caused by negligence or misconduct.
- If the client chooses to use email, the client is responsible for informing Samaritan of any limitations to the kind of information that will be sent by email.
- The client is responsible for protection of their own password or other means of access to email sent or received. Samaritan is not liable for breaches of confidentiality caused by the client.
- Because employees do not have a right of privacy in their employer's email system, clients should not use their work/business system to send or receive confidential medical information.
- When an email is received by a Samaritan therapist or administrative staff person, there will be an attempt made to read it promptly and, when appropriate, respond. However, Samaritan cannot assure a specific time frame and suggests sending a follow-up email or phone call if some time has passed.
- Emails concerning diagnosis and/or treatment become part of the client's medical record and is available to certain authorized entities such as health care providers and insurers for the purposes of treatment and reimbursement. While emails may be forwarded within the agency for these purposes,

Samaritan will not forward the email outside the agency without the consent of the client or as required by law (per your therapist's disclosure statement).

- **Email should not be used when transmitting sensitive medical information.**
- **Email should not be used in the case of a medical emergency.**

I have read the above privacy concerns and conditions for the use of email and consent to the use of email for communications to and from Samaritan Center of Puget Sound.

Signature of Client

Date of Signature

Printed Name of Client