

SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH SYSTEM
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES

DATE: April 18, 2005

BHRS POLICY: 05-04

SUBJECT: Transportation of Behavioral Health Clients; Use of County Car

AUTHORITY: County; Divisional

AMENDED: 9/12/07, 11/12/08, 9/12/12 and 8/7/13

PURPOSE

To affirm that the purpose of transporting clients and/or using county vehicles is to:

- facilitate assessment and/or treatment,
- support psycho/social rehabilitation, and
- provide opportunities for client participation in recovery based activities.

The further purpose of this policy is to promote high levels of safety when transporting clients of all ages, to describe staff responsibilities when transporting clients in personal automobiles, and to describe conditions for the use of County vehicles and gas cards.

POLICY

1. Eligibility

- a. Every individual driving a county vehicle or transporting clients in personal cars must have a valid California Driver's License without outstanding citations.
- b. Per county regulation, it is the individual's responsibility to notify his/her supervisor if the license has lapsed or been suspended, or significant violations occur. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.
- c. Contracted members of the behavioral health workforce and volunteers must have licenses submitted to Risk Management for clearance, before they may drive county vehicles.
- d. Staff whose duties primarily involve driving clients must have licenses sent to Risk Management for review of their driving record.
- e. Certain other classes of staff, including, but not limited to staff at Canyon Oaks and trainees will have licenses sent for review to Risk Management by behavioral health administration. The license of any other staff member may be sent for review to Risk Management by behavioral health administration or the individual's supervisor.
- f. Barring negative findings, the following categories of staff may transport clients in personal or county vehicles.
 - Any staff member, regular or extra-help.

- Contracted staff that are part of the Organized Health Care Agreement (OHCA) with Behavioral Health and Recovery Services. Those contractors for whom transportation is an anticipated function shall have this listed as part of the identified services in their contracts.
- g. Volunteers must agree to driving record review by county Risk Management at the time of initial application; evidence of a clear driving record is required prior to using a county vehicle. Volunteers may not transport clients in privately owned vehicles.
- h. In unique circumstances, where there are clear benefits to clients, specific staff members of community mental health agencies may be allowed to transport clients in county vans if the following conditions are met:
 - Prior approval has been given by the Youth or Adult Deputy Director.
 - Clients transported are seen within the larger system of care and are not restricted to clients of the agency.
 - The driver's license of the agency staff member has been sent to Risk Management and cleared.

2. Training

Supervisors will give this policy to staff and review pertinent sections with the staff member, trainee or volunteer to be sure they understand all expectations, rules and regulations.

3. Transporting Children

- a. Children/adolescents (up to the age of consent) may not be transported without the expressed or written consent of the parent/guardian.
- b. All child safety laws will be scrupulously observed.
- c. Current safety law mandates that children age 8 or younger who are less than 4-feet 9 inches tall must be secured in an approved car seat or booster seat in the rear seat.
- d. Children age 8 or younger who are 4 feet 9 inches or taller may be secured with a seat belt in the rear seat.
- e. Booster seats offer protection for children over 60 pounds and under 4-foot 9 inches tall by allowing seat belts to fit securely and correctly. Car seats that will accommodate children from 5-100 pounds have been purchased and are available (at least one per site) at each Behavioral Health Clinic site.
 - Additional car seats may be purchased to meet additional demonstrated needs.
 - Car seats may be installed only by a staff member (trainee, volunteer) who has been trained in the correct installation of the seat.
- f. Community Workers, Family Partners and others who are likely to be transporting children will attend the Sheriff's car seat safety inspection (held weekly) to assure that staff are trained on the proper installation of the car seats in county cars.
 - When newer models of car seats or booster seats are purchased, staff must receive additional training to assure safe installation.
 - Personally owned car seats and booster seats may not be installed in County cars.
 - County owned car seats and booster seats may not be installed in non-county cars, including taxis.
- g. All children over the weight of 100 pounds will be secured with seat belts.

- h. Children under age twelve may not ride in the front seat of a vehicle.
- i. Back doors will be locked using child safety devices to prevent the child from opening the door while the vehicle is moving.
- j. Parents may not hold children on their laps or in their arms while being transported.

4. General Safety Provisions

- a. All adult passengers and children not secured in car seats must use seat belts while being transported.
- b. No car may be used for transporting clients if it is known that safety features are faulty (mirrors, lights, locks, etc.).
- c. Tires must be visually inspected to assure sufficient tread for safe handling.
- d. Every driver must exercise clinical judgment before deciding to transport a client. Staff will specifically consider whether there are any immediate factors such as agitation or lack of impulse control that might impact the safe transport of a client.
- e. **Staff members are specifically prohibited from transporting a client on an involuntary hold (5150) to a hospital.**

5. Use of Personal Cars

- a. **The staff member must carry the legal minimum insurance required by California law. In the case of an accident, the first claim will be on the staff member's own auto insurance.** Per County Policy, "the County will not be involved in repair to either the employee's vehicle or the member of the public's vehicle until that employee's policy limits have been exhausted. The County insurance is excess insurance over the employee's own insurance."
- b. Staff are advised to check with their own insurance carriers to determine whether their existing car insurance will cover accidents that occur if they use their own cars to transport clients. Some carriers may view this as distinctly different than using a personal car to drive to and from the work site, and may require the purchase of additional coverage.
- c. Contracted members of the behavioral health force (as described in this policy, 1, f) shall have individual insurance requirements determined during initial contract negotiations.
- d. No staff member is required to transport clients in his/her own car; this is a voluntary decision by the staff member at all times.
- e. It is highly preferable to transport clients in county vehicles. Staff, however, may continue to exercise clinical and personal judgment about the use of a privately owned car for client transport.
- f. On a case by case basis, for safety or clinical reasons, a supervisor may require that a client be transported in a county car rather than a personal car.

6. Use of County Cars/Vans

- a. Use of bus passes and taxi vouchers should be considered as alternatives to staff transportation of a client.
- b. Vehicles kept at clinic sites must be shared by many staff; each clinic shall develop protocols for the use, maintenance and prior reservation of cars.
- c. In the case of sites with several behavioral health teams, all staff must be provided access to the county car(s) stored at that location.

- d. Use of a county car/van is always client directed and is not appropriate merely as a staff convenience. Priority for use will be given to the actual transport of a client.
- e. When a county car/van must be kept overnight or taken out of the county, specific approval by the staff member's supervisor is required. (The supervisor may consult with the appropriate adult or youth manager at any time, before agreeing to the staff request.) By County Ordinance, vehicles may not be used for personal reasons while kept overnight or on weekends at the staff member's home.
- f. The vehicle must be returned to the car pool or parked at the behavioral health site, with the vehicle interior clean and waste discarded.

7. Use of County Gas Card

- a. Clinic procedure should include a method to keep the county car filled with gas and serviced at appropriate intervals. The vehicle should not be left with a gas tank below one-quarter full when returning it for the next user.
- b. When the vehicle will require filling with gas during a long trip, it is allowable to request the gas card. Extreme caution must be taken to secure the card from loss or theft at all times.
- c. The clinic protocol must define who is responsible for keeping the gas card and for signing it out and back from users. Gas card users will obtain receipts and return these with the card to the designated person.

8. Fines and Penalties

Any fines or penalties incurred for toll, traffic and parking violations, whether in personal or county cars, are the responsibility of the driver, not the county. Note: Hybrid/electric cars must display valid Access stickers to be exempt from car pool and toll-bridge car-pool requirements.

Approved: Signature on File
 Stephen Kaplan, Director
 Behavioral Health and Recovery Services

Reviewed: _____
