

Client Rights

A handbook for
.....
our clients and
.....
their families



As a client you have many rights.

Because you have many decisions to make, understanding your rights will help you get the best possible care. Knowing your rights can help you:

- Make better decisions about your care.
- Resolve any problems that may occur.

Also, you always have the right to ask questions and get the information you need to make the best decision for you.

You have the right to be treated with respect.

It's your right to:

Be informed of your rights.

By law, we must inform you of all of your rights within the first three visits to our program (or within the first 72 hours if you're in a 24-hour facility). You also have the right to:

- Ask that printed information explaining your rights be given to you in a way that you can understand.
- Know what to do and who to call if you believe someone is trying to take away your rights. See Page 10 of this booklet for the names and telephone numbers of organizations you can call for help.



Know what is expected of you.

We must let you know about any rules you need to follow. This information should be shared with you when you begin receiving services. If this does not happen, ask someone you trust to help you get this information.

Get the best services possible.

You should receive the best care possible from professionals who care about your needs.

Always be treated with respect.

Employees should be courteous, attentive and sensitive to your needs and values.

You have the right to have information about you kept confidential.

Medical records, treatment plans and any other information about you (including what you say or share) must be kept private.

To be given this information, anyone not directly involved in your care, including family members, must first have your permission.



By law, there are some situations when information about you may be shared without your permission. These include:

- When it is in your best interest and it will not be harmful to you, your closest relative or guardian may be informed that you are a client. If you are under 18 years old, your parent or guardian may be informed that you are a client.
- When a client advocate who is helping you needs to review your record.
- When we are ordered by the court to release your record.
- If our attorney needs to see your file because of a lawsuit or other legal action.
- If you have been committed to an institution and we need to share information about you in order to manage your care.
- If we transfer your care to any other county mental health program or state facility.
- If you are in prison and your record needs to be shared with prison officials to continue your treatment.
- If you have an emergency, we may need to share information with another professional who is treating you.
- If a physician or other professional who referred you to our program needs information.
- If you are a danger to yourself or others, or if we believe that you will commit a serious legal offense or become violent.
- If we suspect abuse or neglect.

You have the right to live as freely as possible.

It's your right to:

Live in the best environment for you.

You have the right to live and receive services in an area that is safe, comfortable and suitable to your special needs. This may include receiving assistance such as a wheelchair ramp or reserved parking space for handicapped individuals.



Live as independently as possible.

Our responsibility is to help you achieve greater independence. For example, that may mean helping you to learn how to cook, find a job or obtain your own apartment, depending on your needs and interests.

You have the right to informed consent.

“Informed consent” means having all of the information you need before you make a decision about your care. Except during an emergency, informed consent is always your right. Before you give your approval for any service or treatment, be sure you have all of the information you need. This includes understanding the following:

Your service plan.

It's your right to be involved in developing and reviewing your service plan. This plan must be in use no later than 30 days after your services start.

Your choices.

Before you agree to your plan, you must be informed of the advantages and risks of the services you receive. You must also be informed about all of the different kinds of services that are available to you in the Guilford Center.

It's your right to:

Understand your medication.



You have the right to know the possible side effects of medication and to be free from unnecessary medication. Medication cannot be used as a punishment or for the convenience of staff.

Accept or refuse services.

By law, you can accept or refuse any procedure, medication, test or treatment with the Guilford Center. The only times you can be treated without your permission are during an emergency, when it is court-ordered, or if you are under 18 years old and your parent or guardian has given permission.

Exercise your rights as a citizen.

As a citizen, you have many rights. These include buying or selling property, signing a contract, registering to vote, and marrying or getting a divorce. Unless you have been declared incompetent by the court, you will always have these rights.

Keep in touch with family and friends.

You can spend time with your friends or anyone you choose as long as they are willing.



Make advance directives.

You have the right to prepare a written plan for your mental health care, known as an advance directive, that says how you want to be cared for if you ever become unable to decide or speak for yourself.

Your plan may also include a “health-care proxy.” This lets you name another person to make decisions about your care if you become unable to do so.

For help in preparing these plans, we recommend that you speak with someone you trust. For example, this person can be a staff member, family member or a minister. You can also contact the agencies listed on Page 10 for assistance.

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You also have other rights.

As permitted by law, it's your right to:

Review your medical records.

In general, you have the right to review information in your medical records, which includes your service plan. The only time you cannot see your records is if more than one professional determines that it would be harmful for you or someone else.

See a medical doctor, nurse, dentist or other health care provider.

If you are sick or need medical help, you have the right to receive medical treatment.



Know the costs of services.

Fees for services should be discussed with you at your first visit. You should also receive the brochure “Client Fees: Questions and Answers,” which explains how fees are charged and what you can expect to pay.

Take part in discharge planning.

A discharge plan provides recommendations for your care after you complete your treatment with the Guilford Center. Be sure to discuss what your needs are with a staff person before leaving the agency.

Contact a private professional at your own expense.

You have the right to contact professionals outside the Guilford Center, such as your lawyer, at your own expense.

Be accepted for treatment.

Your services cannot be denied, interrupted or reduced without good cause.

If you are a Medicaid client (or if you are eligible to be one) and your treatment is denied, interrupted, reduced or stopped, you can appeal the decision by following instructions given to you when you are notified of the change in services.

Be aware of when seclusion and restraints are allowed.

These should be used only as a last resort. They may be used in a medical emergency, or in situations where a client is in danger of hurting himself or herself or others, or of damaging property.

Seclusion and restraints must NOT be used as a punishment or for the convenience of staff. You should be informed about any interventions or restrictions that may be used where you receive services.

You have the right to express your concerns

If you feel someone is taking away your rights or if you are dissatisfied with services, we urge you to take the following steps:

1. First, talk to your assigned staff person. Most concerns can be resolved by discussing them with staff and staff supervisors.
2. If you choose not to talk directly to your assigned staff person, ask the receptionist about how to contact a his or her supervisor.
3. If this is not helpful, contact the Service Manager or Coordinator.
4. If this does not resolve your concerns, the Service Manager or Coordinator will send a report to the Client Rights Coordinator. If necessary, the Client Rights Committee, made up of citizen volunteers, will help reach a fair solution.
5. At any time, you may request outside assistance by calling any advocacy organization, including those listed on Page 10. You can also get in touch with the Client Rights Coordinator by calling 641-6644.



6. If your concern involves physical or sexual abuse, you should call the Department of Social Services (DSS) at 641-3795 (child) or 641-3137 (adult).

Contact an advocate, if desired.

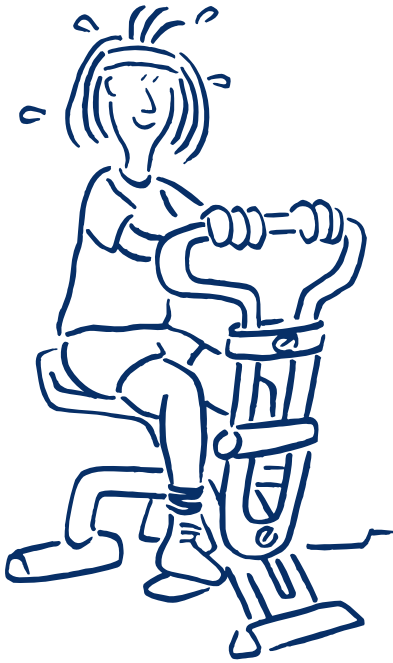
Advocates can help to protect your rights and resolve conflicts. Listed below are a few of the organizations you can call to get in touch with an advocate:

- Mental Health Association in Greensboro, 373-1402
- Mental Health Association in High Point, 883-7480
- The Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities, 1-800-821-6922
- NC Mental Health Consumers' Organization, 1-800-326-3842
- NC CARELINE, 1-800-662-7030
- NAMI Guilford County, 370-4264
- NAMI North Carolina, 1-800-451-9682
- The Arc of Greensboro, 373-1076
- The Arc of High Point, 883-0650

Additional Rights in a 24-Hour Facility

In most cases, you will have all of the rights listed below. However, because of reasons related to your care or treatment there are times when the facility may restrict some of your rights. Some things which MAY be restricted include the right to:

- Make and get phone calls. You can ask people to leave the room or not to listen when you are talking on the phone.
- Have visitors at certain times and refuse visitors.
- Meet with and talk to any person you want as long as that person is willing.
- Make visits outside your facility.
- Get assistance with managing your money.
- Have your own belongings and wear your own clothes.
- Take part in religious worship.
- Keep and spend some of your money.
- Have or keep a driver's license.
- Have privacy when you dress or are in the bathroom.
- Have your own storage space.
- Shave and take a shower or bath every day.



- Go outdoors and exercise daily.
- Receive a discharge plan that gives recommendations for additional services.

Rights which CANNOT be restricted include the right to:

- Send and get unopened mail. You can have staff read your mail to you, but only if you ask. You can have staff help you write a letter if you ask.
- Contact a lawyer, doctor or other private professional at your own expense.
- Receive medical care if you are sick.
- Contact a client advocate if there is a client advocate.

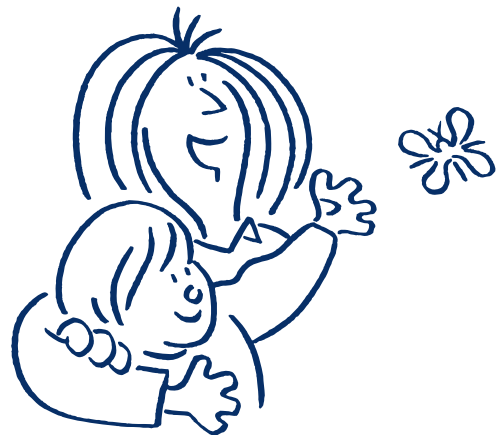
Additional Rights for Minors in a 24-Hour Facility

Clients under 18 years of age have other rights. Rights which CANNOT be restricted include the right to:

- Receive adult supervision and assistance.
- Talk to a parent or guardian.
- Contact a client advocate if there is a client advocate.

Minors also have rights which MAY be restricted. These include the right to:

- Have visitors at specified times with proper adult supervision.
- Receive special educational and vocational training.
- Receive help with learning how to manage money (for individuals 16 years or older).
- Send and receive mail.





ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
232 NORTH EDGEWORTH STREET
GREENSBORO, NC 27401
336.641.4981
FAX 336.641.7761
24-HOUR ACCESS TO CARE LINE 1(800) 853-5163
TTY 336.641.6983

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