



Electronic Communication with Patients / Clients

Effective: 02 November 2020

1. Guiding Principles

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS) Great Southern Mental Health (GSMHS) is a specialist service that provides inpatient and ambulatory care to mental health patients in the Great Southern Mental Health Catchment Area.

The use of electronic communication with patients/clients is only to occur if there are robust systems to protect the safety, security and confidentiality of all parties and the use is not in conflict with the WACHS [Social Media Policy](#).

The use of electronic communication with patients/clients can create an expectation that clients can communicate risk to clinicians via this means, and can increase the risk of harm to clients in the event of the communication not being received. It can also create the opportunity for inappropriate or harassing communication to be received directly to the clinician’s personal communication options.

2. Procedure

The Great Southern Mental Health service **does not** support or endorse clinicians to:

- communicate directly with clients via their WACHS email address
- provide clients with their work mobile phone number or the mobile phone number for any member of staff
- communicate with clients via any form of social media.

The Great Southern Mental Health service does not have adequate systems to ensure that client and clinician safety, security and confidentiality can be maintained if these methods of communication are used.

All people contacting triage and clients entering the service are to be provided with comprehensive information on how to contact the service and the options for after hours and crisis support.

If a situation arises where a client/patient is requesting to make contact with the service or an individual clinician via text or email, this is to be discussed with the Team Manager to explore options that are secure, reliable and confidential.

3. Definitions

Electronic communication includes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile phone calls or texting • Facebook or other social media communication • E-mail.
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4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Clinical Director and Manager GS Mental Health are to:

- Develop systems to ensure that all WACHS GS Mental health staff (medical and allied health) are provided with an orientation to this procedure.

GS Mental Health staff: are to:

- Provide those contacting the service and new clients with information on how to contact the service and the options for after hours and crisis support
- Operate within the parameters of the GSMHS Community Mental Health Case Management Procedure and provide timely feedback to their line manager of any risks or problems associated with this procedure.

5. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy document may constitute a breach of the WA Health [Code of Conduct Policy](#). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) (WA) and is binding on all WACHS staff which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency staff) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

6. Records Management

All WACHS clinical records must be managed in accordance with [Health Record Management Policy](#).

7. Evaluation

Monitoring of compliance with this document is to be carried out by Team Managers through the multi-disciplinary management of treatment. This procedure is to be reviewed in five (5) years.

8. Standards

National Safety and Quality Health Care Standards [Second Edition](#): 2.10, 6.1, 6.3
[National Standards for Mental Health Services](#): 10.2.2, 10.2.3, 8.10

9. Legislation

[WA Mental Health Act 2014](#)

10. Related Policy Documents

[Community Mental Health Case Management Procedure – Great Southern Mental Health Service](#)

11. Related WA Health System Policies

WACHS [Social Media Policy](#)

12. Policy Framework

[Mental Health](#)

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability

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