

	<b>STATE MENTAL HOSPITAL POLICY</b>  <b>COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA</b> <b>OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES</b>		
	<b>NUMBER:</b> SMH-P-08-04	<b>ISSUE DATE:</b> March 20, 2008	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> March 20, 2008
<b>SUBJECT:</b>  Consumer Possession and Use of Cellular Telephones		<b>BY:</b>  Aidan Altenor Director, Bureau of Community and Hospital Operations	

**SCOPE:**

State Mental Health Hospitals - Civil

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to institute uniform guidelines for consumer use of cellular telephones during their hospitalization at a State Mental Hospital. The State Mental Hospitals (SMHs) shall adopt and implement these guidelines related to the possession and use of cellular telephones by consumers. All SMHs shall revise their policies, procedures, and practices accordingly.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) and the Bureau of Community and Hospital Operations (BCHO) support the principles of Recovery and assure that all treatment be provided in the most appropriate and least restrictive environment consistent with the safety, welfare of staff, public and other individuals in residence. An individual consumer's right to communication shall be ensured through various ongoing mechanisms that may include the individual's use of a cellular telephone.

**COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:**

Director, Bureau of Community and Hospital Operations, DPW-OMHSAS,  
 P.O. Box 2675, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2675 or phone 717-705-8151.

## **DISCUSSION:**

As delineated in the Bill of Rights, the State Mental Hospital system of Pennsylvania shall consider the communication needs of consumers to be an important tool in their connectivity with family and friends. Communication may be written or verbal. Each hospital shall provide a sufficient number of public telephones for consumer utilization and when necessary, assist an individual consumer in making telephone calls utilizing hospital equipment. Personal cellular telephones may be utilized by consumers upon concurrence of the treatment team and the hospital Chief Executive Officer. The use of photographic/camera cellular telephones shall be prohibited from use within the State Mental Hospitals to ensure all consumers' rights under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 are upheld.

## **SMH Staff Responsibilities:**

Ensure hospital policies are in compliance with the requirements specified.

1. The hospital's Policy shall be displayed on the unit bulletin board and/or other designated areas visible to consumers.
2. Consumer requests to maintain and utilize their personal cellular telephones shall be reviewed by the involved treatment team. Based upon the individual consumer's needs, a recommendation for use of the cellular telephone shall be forwarded to the hospital Chief Executive Officer. This recommendation from the treatment team will include an individualized assessment on phone usage with details such as where the phone charger will be housed, times for phone use (not in room when others are sleeping), and other related recommendations.
3. The hospital's Chief Executive Officer shall review the treatment team recommendation and render a final decision. This decision shall be communicated to the consumer and the treatment team.
4. Cellular telephones shall not be permitted to be utilized during designated treatment plan program times.

## **Related Policies:**

Refer to the Governor's Office of Administration memoranda dated March 15, 2004, and April 3, 2006, regarding the use of: Camera, picture, and video cellular telephones in the workplace.