

Patient Rights

In general, all public and private mental health facilities are prohibited from depriving you of any of your personal property or civil rights. These include the right to vote, the right to hold or convey property and the right to enter into contracts, except when you have been declared legally "incapable" of managing your own affairs through the due process of law. If you have been found to be legally incapable, any such finding should specifically state which civil or personal rights the court has determined you are incapable of exercising.

APPLICABLE CONNECTICUT STATE STATUTES AND FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING:

- You have the right to receive humane and dignified treatment at all times with full respect for your personal dignity and privacy.
- You have the right to a specialized treatment plan that is developed with your input and designed to meet your needs. Any treatment plan should include, but not be limited to, reasonable notice of discharge and your active participation in planning for appropriate aftercare.
- You have the right to privacy and confidentiality. Records that identify you as an individual and the manner of your treatment or diagnosis cannot be given to any other person or agency without your written consent, except as otherwise required or permitted by law.
- You have the right to visit and have private conversations with members of the clergy, attorneys or paralegals of your choice at any reasonable hour. You also have the right to have other visitors during scheduled visiting hours specified by the hospital, unless the hospital has determined that it would be medically harmful to you to do so. Your mail or other communications may not be intercepted or censored by the hospital, except under special circumstances, and then only after you have been provided with a written notice from the head of the hospital which explains why any interception or censorship is necessary.
- You, or your attorney, have the right, upon written request, to inspect your hospital records, though the hospital may refuse to disclose any portion of the record that has been determined to (a.) create a substantial risk that you would inflict a life threatening injury to yourself or others, (b.) put you at risk of experiencing a severe deterioration in mental state, or (c.) constitute an invasion of privacy of another person.
- If conditions are such that you must be restrained or placed in seclusion, the hospital is required to treat you in a humane and dignified manner. The use of involuntary seclusion or mechanical restraints is permitted only when there is an imminent danger to yourself or others, and the reasons for any restraint or seclusion must be documented in your clinical records.
- You must be given a physical examination within five (5) days of your admission to the hospital and a report of this examination must be entered into your clinical record.
- You cannot be subjected to shock therapy or any other medical, surgical or psychosurgical procedure without your written, informed consent, and you cannot be forced to take medications against your will except when such treatment is provided under emergency conditions to ensure your safety or the safety of others. Additionally, if the hospital has decided that you should be medicated against your will when there is no immediate risk to you or others, you have the right to petition the Probate Court to hold a hearing and decide whether to allow this intervention.

- If you have been admitted to the hospital under a Physicians' Emergency Certificate ["PEC"], you must be discharged after no more than fifteen (15) days if you were hospitalized due to a psychiatric illness or five (5) days if you were hospitalized for treatment of a substance abuse problem unless an application for involuntary commitment has been filed in a court of competent jurisdiction. You also have the right to challenge your hospitalization through a probable cause hearing before the Probate Court (or before the Superior Court under certain circumstances). If you request such a hearing: (a.) the request must be made in writing, (b.) the hearing must be held within three (3) business days of your filing the request (business days do not include weekends or holidays), (c.) you have the right to be represented by an attorney at this hearing, and (d.) you have the right to cross-examine any witnesses.
- If you have been admitted to the hospital as a voluntary patient, you have the right to be informed, upon admission, that you may submit a request to be discharged at any time, and that the hospital may hold you for up to three (3) days after you have submitted such a request only if the hospital has reason to believe that you may harm yourself, may harm someone else, or are so incapacitated by mental illness that you are unable to take care of your own needs. Once you have filed a written request to be discharged, you must be discharged from the hospital after no more than three (3) days from the time this request was filed unless an application for involuntary commitment has been filed in a court of competent jurisdiction.
- You cannot be denied employment, housing, civil service rank, any license (including a professional license) or any other civil or legal right, solely because of a present or past history of a mental disorder, unless otherwise provided by law.
- You have the right to file a grievance or complaint if: (a.) any staff or facility has violated a right that you have under applicable State or Federal Laws and Regulations; (b.) you have been treated in an arbitrary or unreasonable manner; (c.) you have been denied services authorized by a treatment plan due to negligence, discrimination or other improper reason; (d.) any staff or facility has engaged in coercion to improperly limit your treatment choices; (e.) any staff or facility has unreasonably failed to intervene when your rights have been jeopardized; or (f.) any staff or facility has failed to treat you in a humane or dignified manner.
- If you believe that your rights have been violated, you have the right to petition the Superior Court within whose jurisdiction you reside for appropriate relief.

Many of the rights of patients in facilities in Connecticut are specified in Sections 17a-540 through 17a-550 of the Connecticut General Statutes [CGS]. There may be other rights provided by other state and federal statutes and regulations, as well as by case law, but the ones identified in CGS Sections 17a-540 through 17a-550 are specifically protected and must be adhered to by inpatient or outpatient facilities in Connecticut. These statutes apply to both voluntary and involuntary patients, unless otherwise provided by statute, and there may be exceptions and limitations to some rights under certain circumstances. Your rights are specifically detailed in Sections 17a-450 et seq.; 17a-540 et seq.; 17a-680 et seq.; 52-146d-j; 54-56d of the Connecticut General Statutes; in the Code of Federal Regulations (Section 1983; Section 42, Part 2; and Section 45, Parts 160 and 164 of December 28, 2000 as amended May 31, 2002, August 14, 2002, February 2003, and April 17, 2003); as well as in the Rehabilitation Act; the Americans with Disabilities Act; the Patients' Self-Determination Act, and in other parts of state and federal law.

Natchaug Hospital is committed to honoring the rights of all people receiving treatment in our programs. More information is available – just ask any of our staff and they will help you.

Names and telephone numbers of organizations you can contact for help and/or more information are posted in our facilities, and copies are available for you upon request. Ask any of our staff if you want more information and they will help you.

JCAHO Notice: The public may contact the Joint Commission's Office of Quality Monitoring to report any concern or to register a complaint about a Joint Commission-accredited health care organization. To do this, you may call 1-800-994-6610 or send an email to complaint@jcaho.org

Información sobre los Derechos de Pacientes es disponible en Español.