

Imperial County Behavioral Health Services



Code of Conduct

March 2021

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Message from the Director

This Code of Conduct is the foundation of the ICBHS Compliance Program. It covers a range of subjects, from the quality of services, to conflict of interest and protection of county assets. It contains the fundamental legal and ethical principles as well as the standards of behavior that each one of us at ICBHS is expected to observe in performing our jobs.

The Code provides you with guidance to many situations that you might encounter in the workplace, but it cannot possibly address every situation in which you may be required to make an ethical decision. That is why it is important for you to understand and have the ability to put into action the department's core values of Adaptability, Decision-Making, Honesty, Integrity, Judge and be Judged, Performance, Respect, Responsibility, Teamwork, and Trust. These values are central to this Code of Conduct.

We are all responsible for implementing the Code in our workplace. Please review and become familiar with the Code of Conduct, particularly those areas that apply to your everyday work activities. When faced with a difficult decision or uncertainty, you should ask questions and seek advice from your supervisor, manager or other appropriate resource. Most important, you are responsible for speaking up about behaviors or actions that may be inconsistent with the Code of Conduct.

Leticia Plancarte-Garcia
Director of ICBHS

Our Mission Statement

Imperial County Behavioral Health Services provides quality professional services to achieve independence and community integration for individuals suffering from mental illness and substance abuse.

Our Vision Statement

To be the Gold Standard in community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Our Core Values

In the pursuit of our mission we embrace the following core values. These values provide a foundation on which a more detailed Code of Conduct is constructed.

- ◆ Adaptability
- ◆ Decision-Making
- ◆ Honesty
- ◆ Integrity
- ◆ Judge and be Judged
- ◆ Performance
- ◆ Respect
- ◆ Responsibility
- ◆ Teamwork
- ◆ Trust

Our Principles

We are dedicated to . . .

- ◆ Providing quality professional services that respect individuality and cultural diversity.
- ◆ Offering, in a non-judgmental environment, services which promote dignity and self-empowerment for individuals on their journey of wellness and recovery.
- ◆ Promoting independence and community integration for individuals with the support of family, peers, and the community.
- ◆ Helping individuals experience relief from emotional distress and assisting them in reaching their goals for a happier life.
- ◆ Offering services that are the least restrictive to people of all ages according to their needs.
- ◆ Holding the staff responsible for showing sensitivity to cultural and ethnic differences so that clients feel understood and respected.
- ◆ Providing early intervention and direct treatment to families in the community.
- ◆ Linking qualified clients to vocational and independent living resources.
- ◆ Encouraging teamwork among staff, clients, and community support systems in order to develop options for better living.
- ◆ Supporting staff by encouraging creativity, while at the same time meeting federal, state and county guidelines.

What is our Compliance Program?

Compliance is a term used in health care industry. It means Imperial County Behavioral Health Services (ICBHS) employees are required to abide by the rules and regulations, and policies that have been established.

The Department has designed and implemented a Compliance Program to strengthen the awareness of compliance issues to all employees, and to prevent and respond to compliance violations. Adhering to licensure requirements, federal, state, and local laws and regulations are viable to the success of our mission.

Compliance Officer: Sarah Moore

Compliance Officer phone number:
442-265-1560

Confidential Compliance Hotline:
1-866-314-7240

Compliance Officer email address:
icbhsprivacyofficer@co.imperial.ca.us

Compliance Post Office:
Imperial County Behavioral Health Services
Attn: Compliance Unit
P.O. Box 1766
El Centro, CA 92244

Introduction to the Code of Conduct

All regular and extra-help employees, contract employees, contract providers and volunteers and other designated individuals engaged in our work environment or acting on behalf of ICBHS, are expected to comply with this Code of Conduct, as well as with all applicable statutes, regulations, contractual obligations and all applicable County and Departmental policies.

This Code of Conduct is intended to express our core values related to:

Quality of Care and Services	Health and Workplace Safety
Adhering to Laws and Regulations	Work Relationships
Billing and Coding	Protecting County Assets
Conflict of Interest	Confidentiality and Privacy
Records Maintenance	Responsibilities of Employees
Human Resources	Non-Retaliation

Violations of federal and/or state healthcare regulations carry serious consequences to both the organization and to the individual. In addition to criminal penalties, violations can result in being excluded from federal healthcare program participation.

This Code of Conduct and the related policies will be reviewed and updated annually or as circumstances warrant. If you have a question or concern that is not specifically addressed by the Code, please consult your supervisor, manager, or the Compliance Officer. Your input is welcome.

Quality of Care and Services

We are committed to providing high quality, cost-effective behavioral healthcare to all of our clients, to the extent resources are available.

We:

- ◇ Treat all clients with dignity, respect, and courtesy and provide care in a manner sensitive of their background, culture, religion, and heritage.
- ◇ Must at all times respect the rights, dignity and interests of their clients. They should treat all clients equitably, and must not discriminate on grounds of lifestyle, gender, age, disability, race, sexuality, religion, beliefs, culture, ethnicity, or financial or social status against clients, colleagues, or anyone else with whom they have dealings in the course of their work.
- ◇ Provide appropriate and effective clinical services that are medically necessary, client focused, evidence-based, in the least restrictive manner possible.
- ◇ Employ professionals with proper credentials and ensure that all individuals providing client treatment and services have appropriate experience and expertise in the area(s) in which they provide service.
- ◇ Ensure there is no disparity in treatment or quality of care delivered based on the source or amount of payment for client services.
- ◇ Document all encounters with ICBHS clients accurately, completely, and timely in accordance with funding source requirements and departmental policy.
- ◇ Provide clients with the information needed to make fully informed decisions.
- ◇ Provide treatment and care to all clients regardless of race, gender, religion, color, economic status, sexual orientation, age, source of payment, or any other discriminatory characteristic.
- ◇ Maintain an effective quality improvement program that at a minimum examines those areas mandated by the California Department of Health Care Services.

Quality of Care and Services

We:

- ◇ Perform our jobs in a manner that seeks to avoid harm to our clients, other employees, the community, our co-workers or the environment.
- ◇ Keep current and renew any license, waiver, certification or registration required for our position prior to the expiration date.
- ◇ Remain abreast of developments in the field through educational activities and clinical experiences.
- ◇ Review and understand the applicable policies and procedures. When in doubt, we consult with our immediate supervisors or designee.
- ◇ Strive to understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of our clients by gaining knowledge, personal awareness, and developing sensitivity and skills pertinent to working with a diverse client population.

Therapeutic Relationships

We perform our duties in a manner that we reasonably believe to be in the best interest of ICBHS and the public it serves, and avoid any conduct that could reasonably be expected to reflect adversely upon the integrity of ICBHS and the services it provides. We are committed to conducting our business ethically and in compliance with all applicable state, federal and county laws, rules, and regulations.

We:

- ◇ Shall not enter in to therapeutic relationships with persons with whom they have had sexual relations.
- ◇ Shall not have sexual contact or sexual intimacy with a client, or client's spouse or partner during the delivery of services. This contact is prohibited during the first six months following the termination of services.
- ◇ Shall not abuse client's trust in order to gain sexual, emotional, financial or any other kind of personal advantage. Practitioners should not engage in sexual relations, or any other type of sexualized behavior, with or towards clients.
- ◇ Are aware of our influential position with respect to clients and shall avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. We avoid dual relationships with clients that are likely to impair professional judgment and lead to exploitation.
- ◇ Shall not use our professional relationships with clients to further our own interests.
- ◇ We will not impose our own personal values on our clients.

Adhering to Laws and Regulations

We are committed to conducting our business in compliance with the spirit and letter of the law in an ethical and honest manner that reinforces our commitment to the community.

We:

- ◇ Comply with all applicable, federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations, standards, and other governmental requirements.
- ◇ Do not engage in any practice that involves unethical or illegal activity that violates regulations or standards.
- ◇ Voluntarily disclose to third party law enforcement or regulatory agencies violations of law, regulations or standards, where appropriate and legally required.
- ◇ Comply with all federal, state, and local laws, regulations and departmental guidelines governing the confidentiality of information.
- ◇ Do not duplicate copyrighted materials in any form, including electronic software without written permission of the license holder.
- ◇ Report any violation or potential violation of laws, rules, safety standards or this Code of Conduct following the established chain of command or to the Compliance Officer or Compliance Hotline.

Billing and Coding

We are committed to processing all claims accurately, including documenting the services performed to support the amounts billed.

We:

- ◇ Bill for services according to the established medical necessity guidelines.
- ◇ Bill only for eligible services actually performed and fully documented.
- ◇ Use billing codes that accurately describe our services. We do not improperly code charges to increase reimbursement.
- ◇ Do not knowingly present or cause to be presented claims for reimbursement that are false, fraudulent, inaccurate, incomplete or fictitious.
- ◇ Prepare complete and accurate documentation in a timely manner consistent with the federal, state, and local regulations and laws and ICBHS policies and procedures and/or agreements.
- ◇ Do not alter or falsify information on any record or document.
- ◇ Do not use client, employee, or any other individual's or entity's information acquired through or in connection with their employment or contract with ICBHS for personal benefit.
- ◇ Identify errors, report them to our supervisor or the appropriate individual and correct them in a timely and appropriate manner.
- ◇ Act promptly to investigate and correct problems if errors in claims or billings are found.
- ◇ Expect any subcontractors engaged to perform services to have the necessary skills, quality control processes, systems, and appropriate procedures to ensure all billings for government and commercial insurance programs are accurate and complete. ICBHS expects such entities to have their own ethics and compliance programs and code of ethics or may choose to adopt ICBHS' code as their own.

Conflict of Interest

We are committed to avoiding business relationships and actions that could interfere with or be perceived to interfere with business or clinical decisions

We:

- ◇ Conduct ourselves in a manner appropriate to our standing as representatives of local government, representing the best interest of the community.
- ◇ Avoid involvement in activities that improperly influence our actions or job functions or are stated in the Conflict of Interest policy.
- ◇ Do not accept or provide benefits/gifts that create conflict with personal interests and ICBHS's interest. These benefits include, but are not limited to, meals, refreshments, transportation, entertainment or any item of monetary value provided or received in connection with assigned duties.
- ◇ Do not offer or give, nor will we solicit or accept gifts from clients, vendors, and others related to our employment unless specifically authorized by applicable policies.
- ◇ Do not engage in any activity that involves the use of facilities, equipment or supplies for private gain or advantage.
- ◇ Disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest in personal or professional relationships.

Records Maintenance

We are committed to maintaining accurate and appropriate records in accordance with all federal, state, and county laws and regulations and departmental policies and procedures.

We:

- ◇ Maintain complete, accurate records and prepare them in a timely manner.
- ◇ Ensure that all financial, clinical, and personnel records, whether paper or electronic, are maintained in accordance with applicable federal and state government and civil codes and make records available for inspection only by authorized individuals.
- ◇ Ensure that records are maintained in an accurate and confidential manner in order to protect privacy.
- ◇ We maintain the integrity of all records and ensure that records are not altered, damaged removed or destroyed prior to the specified destruction date to ensure records are available to support out business practices and actions.
- ◇ Maintain documentation guidelines for recordkeeping according to the legal requirements for the record type.
- ◇ Ensure that timesheets, mileage claims, and reimbursement claims are complete and reflect accurate information.
- ◇ Store records in a safe and secure location for the period of time required by law. We organize our records to permit prompt retrieval and dispose of them in accordance with an established retention policy.
- ◇ Issue and maintain financial and cost reports, accounting records, expense accounts and other documentation that accurately reflect actual transactions and conform to generally accepted accounting principles.

Human Resources

We are committed to treating each other with respect, dignity and courtesy recognizing that the efforts and talents of employees provide our greatest strength.

We:

- ◇ Provide equal employment opportunities to all applicants and employees pursuant to departmental and county policies.
- ◇ Do not discriminate in our employment practices on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, national origin, veteran status, or other classifications protected by law.
- ◇ Screen applicants to avoid hiring anyone who are currently excluded, suspended, debarred or otherwise ineligible to participate in federal healthcare programs.
- ◇ Provide ongoing training opportunities so that all employees will be provided with the avenues to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their employment responsibilities.
- ◇ Adhere to the standards, licensing regulations, the code of ethics and standards of our respective occupations and exercise appropriate judgment in the performance of our job duties.
- ◇ Provide a clear understanding of the expectation for professional conduct from staff and volunteers by providing mandatory training on Employee Orientation, Sexual Harassment, and Compliance.
- ◇ Take appropriate disciplinary action when a violation occurs.
- ◇ The County has established a policy prohibiting, in part, the use, possession, and sale of alcohol, mood-altering substances (e.g., bath salts, spice, etc.), or illegal drugs or having any detectable amount of illegal drugs, mood-altering substances, or alcohol at or above .01% BAC within an employee's bodily system during compensable work time or while in any County workplace as defined in the policy.
- ◇ Additionally, no employee shall manufacture, sell, distribute, trade, dispense, possess, consume, or be under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol while on compensable work time or while at any workplace.

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Health and Workplace Safety

We are committed to the health and safety of our clients, visitors, volunteers, and employees in all of our activities.

We:

- ◇ Comply with workplace safety policies in accordance with federal and state regulations, county ordinances and ICBHS policies and procedures.
- ◇ Implement policies and procedures to keep our facilities safe. We become familiar with and follow emergency and safety plans and procedures.
- ◇ Properly dispose of, handle or store medical waste, environmentally sensitive materials, hazardous materials, infectious material and medical equipment. We use protective equipment appropriately.
- ◇ Store, dispense and dispose all prescription drugs and controlled substances according to applicable laws, regulations and departmental policies.
- ◇ Use all equipment in a safe manner and in conformance with operating instructions.
- ◇ Maintain a tobacco free environment at our facilities in accordance with County Ordinance and departmental policy.
- ◇ Maintain a work environment free of alcohol and illegal drugs.
- ◇ Do not bring dangerous weapons to the workplace, including parking lots. A dangerous weapon is a firearm or any other instrument capable of causing bodily harm when used in a manner in under circumstances that manifest intent to harm, or to intimidate another person, or that would cause a reasonable person to have concern for their safety or the safety of another.
- ◇ Do not tolerate threatening or abusive behavior, sexual or other forms of illegal harassment or discrimination. Degrading or humiliating jokes, slurs, or other harassing conduct is not tolerated in our workplace.

Health and Workplace Safety

We:

- ◇ Under this policy, an employee is required to notify his or her supervisor before performing any duty within the scope of employment if the employee is taking any medication or drug, either prescription or non-prescription, that might impair the employee's effectiveness or safe-job performance. The name of the medication or reason for its use need not be reported. An employee that violates this policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, even for a first violation (Drug and Alcohol Policy).

Protecting County Assets

We are committed to protecting the County's assets, facilities, equipment and supplies against loss, theft or misuse.

We:

- ◇ Use work hours to perform County duties and assignments in a productive and professional manner.
- ◇ Have a duty to participate in efforts to prevent fraud waste and abuse and ensure that public resources are used ethically, prudently and for legally designated purposes.
- ◇ Are responsible and accountable for the proper expenditure of County funds according to federal, state and County Purchasing guidelines.
- ◇ Perform cash handling and receipting duties in accordance with County and departmental policies and procedures.
- ◇ Dispose of surplus, obsolete or inoperable property in accordance federal and state regulations, County or departmental procedures.
- ◇ Operate county vehicles for the purposes of conducting county business, in a lawful, safe and responsible manner at all times. Report any damage to county vehicles or accidents as soon as possible.
- ◇ Safely store, secure, document and transport inventory supplies, and report missing supplies promptly to appropriate supervisors.
- ◇ Safely store and preserve departmental records, both electronic and paper, according to County and departmental policy.
- ◇ Use computer systems, networks, and software in a manner that is consistent with ICBHS licenses and/or rights, and according to County and departmental policy.
- ◇ Store equipment, data files, and software in a secure manner, in accordance with federal and state regulations and departmental policies and procedures.
- ◇ Report any observed misuse of County property or funds to an appropriate supervisor or manager, or the confidential Compliance Hotline.

Work Relationships

We are committed to a team oriented work environment that encourages employees to be open, work collaboratively and share ideas.

We:

- ◇ Conduct ourselves with integrity, honesty, courtesy, and fairness in dealing with the public and fellow employees. Verbal, emotional, and physical abuse such as; threats of violence bodily harm, physical intimidation, sexual, or other forms of illegal harassment or discrimination will not be tolerated.
- ◇ Seek positive and cooperative relationships within ICBHS, as well as with other governmental programs, vendors, contractors, community groups, and industry, to enhance services and resources available to the public.
- ◇ Practice integrity in our dealings with clients, contractors, vendors, payers, other employees or agents, and the community.
- ◇ Maintain a work culture that promotes the prevention, detection and resolution of instances of conduct that do not conform to ethical standards and our Code of Conduct.
- ◇ Disclose to the supervisor or manager involvement in any relationships that might compromise objectivity, accountability or judgment, or give the appearance thereof.
- ◇ Ensure that no employee is required to compromise his or her appropriate professional integrity, standards, judgment, objectivity or ethical beliefs in the performance of his or her duties.
- ◇ Ensure that all reports or other information provided to any internal or external entity, including federal, state, or local government agencies, are accurate and submitted in a timely manner.
- ◇ Perform duties in a way that promotes the public trust and encourages participation and access to County programs and resources.
- ◇ Will not make statements in public or in private conversations which are malicious, false, or unfounded such that they are disruptive to the operations of the county.

Work Relationships

We:

- ◇ Shall not condone or engage in discrimination, or refuse services to anyone on the basis of race, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic, or marital status, We make reasonable efforts to accommodate clients who have physical disabilities.
- ◇ Take appropriate measures, when personal/employment-related problems or conflicts that may interfere with performing work-related duties, such as obtaining professional consultation, assistance or communicating with our immediate supervisor or designee.
- ◇ Assist colleagues who are experiencing an impairment which may prevent a co-worker from performing his or her job.
- ◇ Work toward the best interest of ICBHS and not only to the unit we are assigned.
- ◇ Are to exercise considerable caution and consult with ICBHS Administration before entering into personal or business relationships with former clients and should expect to be held professionally accountable if the relationship becomes detrimental to the client or to the standing of the profession.
- ◇ Should not carry out an assessment or intervention with, or provide supervision to, someone with whom they have an existing relationship. In the event of a practitioner having an existing relationship with any person who is referred to an agency in which they work, this should be drawn to the attention of the practitioner's line manager and supervisor.

Confidentiality and Privacy

We are committed to protecting each employee and each client's right to privacy in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations.

We:

- ◇ Respect the privacy of our clients and coworkers recognizing that we have access to the information of others on a "need to know" basis in accordance with our assigned responsibilities.
- ◇ Inform our clients of their health information privacy rights and how we will protect their rights in a notice of privacy practices. We will support each client's right to review information contained in his or her clinical record, request amendment to the record, request restrictions, confidential communication, or accounting of where each client's information was disclosed. We will evaluate each request and those deemed reasonable or required by law will be fulfilled.
- ◇ Take reasonable steps to limit the use of, disclosure of, and requests for health information to the minimum necessary to accomplish the intended purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law.
- ◇ Do not reveal medical, clinical or business information unless such release is supported by a legitimate clinical or business purpose, client authorization, or court or agency order and is in compliance with applicable laws, rules, regulations and Departmental policies and procedures.
- ◇ Refrain from discussing sensitive or confidential information in any public area, including elevators, hallways, restrooms, lobbies or break areas.
- ◇ Treat individual salary, benefits, payroll, personnel files, and information on disciplinary matters as confidential information.
- ◇ Maintain security of the information stored on paper and electronically and transmitted on our computer systems. We do not disclose information regarding the Department's financial performance without appropriate approval.
- ◇ Take precautions to respect the privacy of those with whom we work or consult, recognizing that privacy may be established by law, institutional rules, or professional code of ethics.

Responsibilities of Employees

Our compliance program will succeed through the efforts of dedicated employees who conduct themselves with honesty and integrity. Although each individual is responsible for his or her own conduct, the Department is committed to maintaining a work environment that encourages employees to practice the highest ethical standards in performing their daily tasks.

Employees responsibilities are as follows:

- ◇ Reading, acknowledging and abiding by the ICBHS Code of Conduct.
- ◇ Assisting in creating a culture within ICBHS that promotes the highest standards of ethics and compliance.
- ◇ Complying with the Code of Conduct, ICBHS policies and procedures, contractual obligations, and all applicable laws and regulations. Failure to comply with this section may potentially subject an employee to civil and criminal liability, sanctions, penalties and disciplinary action.
- ◇ Registered, certified, and licensed staff shall comply with the elements found in the Code of Conduct(s) for the certifying organization(s) the program counselors are certified under.
- ◇ Cooperating with the investigation of possible violations related to the Code of Conduct, ICBHS policies and procedures, and laws and regulations.

Before making decisions, we consider the following:

- * Is it legal and ethical?
- * Is it consistent with ICBHS policy and Code of Conduct?
- * Is it consistent with ICBHS' mission?

Reporting Responsibilities

We report any violation or potential violation of laws, rules, safety standards or of the Code of Conduct, departmental policies and procedures following the chain of command to our Compliance Officer or the Compliance Hotline.

By self-reporting, employees are not exempt from the consequences of their own misconduct. However, self-reporting will be taken into consideration in determining the appropriate course of action.

Before reporting a violation or what he or she believes is a violation to the Code of Conduct, an employee should consider the following questions:

- * Do I have all the facts to support the allegation?
- * Do I believe the action violates standards as outlined in the Code of Conduct?
- * Do I believe the action violates known laws, rules, regulations, and/or policies and procedures?

Depending on the circumstances, failure to report a known or suspected violation could subject an employee to disciplinary action.

Managers and supervisors have additional responsibilities under the Code to:

- ◇ Ensure that staff have sufficient information and training to comply with established laws, regulations and policies.
- ◇ Enforce the standards of this code and all other related laws, regulations and policies.
- ◇ Responding in an appropriate and timely manner to issues and concerns brought to their attention by employees.
- ◇ Monitor compliance of the employees they supervise.

Non-Retaliation

We will not permit retaliation for reporting a perceived or potential violation of the Code of Conduct, ICBHS policies and procedures or laws or regulations, or for participating in an investigation of an alleged violation. Knowingly making false accusations is a serious violation of organizational policy.

No disciplinary action or other types of retaliation will be taken against any individual who, in good faith, reports a concern, issue, problem, or violation of law, regulation or the Code of Conduct to a manager or supervisor, Human Resource Director, Risk Management Director, the Compliance Officer or the Employee Compliance Hotline.

When individuals make reports, they make them in good faith and without improper motive. This means that those who file reports have reasonable and objective cause for doing so.

Any individual who believes that he or she has suffered retaliation for making a report should contact the Compliance Officer or call the Employee Compliance Hotline.