

**First Step To Recovery staff are required to respect your rights and privacy.  
The State of Texas says you have the right to the following:**

1. You have the right to accept or refuse treatment after receiving this explanation.
2. If you agree to treatment or medication you have the right to change your mind at any time (unless specifically restricted by law).
3. You have the right to a humane environment that provides reasonable protection from harm and appropriate privacy for your personal needs.
4. You have the right to be free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
5. You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
6. You have the right to appropriate treatment in the least restrictive setting available that meets your needs.
7. You have the right to be told about the program's rules and regulations before you are admitted, including, without limitation, the rules and policies related to restraints and seclusion. Your legally authorized representative, if any, also has the right to be and shall be notified of the rules and policies related to restraints and seclusion.
8. You have the right to be told before admission:
  - a. the condition to be treated;
  - b. the proposed treatment;
  - c. the risks, benefits, and side effects of all proposed treatment and medication;
  - d. the probable health and mental health consequences of refusing treatment;
  - e. other treatments that are available and which ones, if any, might be appropriate for you; and
  - f. the expected length of stay.
9. You have the right to a treatment plan designed to meet your needs, and you have the right to take part in developing that plan.
10. You have the right to meet with staff to review and update the plan on a regular basis.
11. You have the right to refuse to take part in research without affecting your regular care.
12. You have the right not to receive unnecessary or excessive medication.
13. You have the right to have information about you kept private and to be told about the times when the information can be released without your permission.
14. You have the right to be told in advance of all estimated charges and any limitations on the length of services of which the facility is aware.
15. You have the right to receive an explanation of your treatment or your rights if you have questions while you are in treatment.
16. You have the right to make a complaint and receive a fair response from the facility within a reasonable amount of time.
17. You have the right to complain directly to the Texas Department of State Health Service at any reasonable time.
18. You have the right to get a copy of these rights before you are admitted, including the address and phone number of the Texas Department of State Health Service.
19. You have the right to have your rights explained to you in simple terms, in a way you can understand, within 24 hours of being admitted.

1. You have the right to communicate with people outside the facility. This includes the right to have visitors, to make telephone calls, and to send and receive sealed mail. This right may be restricted on an individual basis by your physician or the person in charge of the program if it is necessary for your treatment or for security, but even then you may contact an attorney or the Department of State Health Services at any reasonable time.
2. If you consented to treatment, you have the right to leave the facility within four hours of requesting release unless a physician determines that you pose a threat of harm to yourself and others.

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**If you feel your rights have been violated or you have a complaint against the program,  
you may file a grievance with the Texas Department of State Health Services**

**The following is our approved grievance procedure:**

Clients may seek remedy for any complaint and may grieve directly to any staff member. A client may write or seek assistance to write their grievance if they are unable to read or write; or it may be made verbally, in which case the staff member receiving the grievance must reduce the verbal grievance into writing immediately and see the client's signature to ensure that the grievance was recorded accurately. The client shall be provided with pens, paper, envelopes, postage and, upon request, access to a telephone in order to file a complaint.

Clients may have direct access to the Chief Executive Officer or Designee. The Chief Executive Officer (or Designee) shall be responsible for forwarding such information within 24 hours of the client's request for the grievance to be handled by the next level or if the Chief Executive Officer (or Designee) decides that the information should be resolved at a different level. The Chief Executive Officer (or Designee) shall inform the governing Board if the grievance is not resolved within seven (7) days or to the client's satisfaction.

All complaints on all levels shall be recognized within 24 hours (72 on weekends). First Step To Recovery Program Director informs the client of the findings and recommendations within seven (7) calendar days of the decision, but no longer than 30 days following the date of the grievance. First Step To Recovery evaluates the grievance thoroughly and objectively, obtaining additional information as needed. If more than seven (7) days is necessary due to investigation or progressing through the chain of command as outlined above, the client shall be informed of the status, including actions which have been taken and actions which will be taken, in writing, within seven (7) days with an approximation of when the grievance will be resolved. The client shall be informed, in writing, of progress and approximations of outcomes every seven (7) calendar days for the duration of the investigation. Clients have the right to grieve at any time directly to the Texas Department of State Health Services or other agencies listed below.

The address and telephone number of the Texas Department of State Health Services and other applicable agencies are:

**Texas Department of State Health Services (Investigations)**

1100 West 49th Street Austin, Texas 78756  
1-800-832-9628

**Texas State Board of Medical Examiners**

(Please note: this agency is for reporting complaints against licensed physicians only)  
1812 Centre Creek Drive, Suite 300  
Austin, Texas 78754

**Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists**

333 Guadalupe, Tower 2, Room 450  
Austin, Texas 78701  
Investigations: (512) 305-7709

**LPCs and LPC Inters: Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors**  
**LMFTS and LMFT Associates: Texas State Board of Examiners of Marriage and Family Therapists**  
**LCSWs and LMSWs: Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners**  
**LCDCs and Counselor Interns: Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor Program**  
Complaints Management and Investigative Section  
P.O. Box 141369  
Austin, Texas 78714-1369  
1-800-942-5540

**Texas Health and Human Services Commission**  
Office of the Ombudsman, MC H-700 Post Office Box 85200  
Austin, Texas 78708-5200  
1-877-787-8999

The Client Grievance Procedure is legible and posted prominently at each program site where clients have the opportunity to read it at their leisure. First Step To Recovery, its staff members, volunteers, consultants, or anyone acting as an agent for First Step To Recovery shall not discourage, intimidate, harass, or seek retribution against clients who try to exercise their rights or file a grievance. First Step To Recovery, its staff members, volunteers, consultants, or anyone acting as an agent for First Step To Recovery shall not restrict, discourage or interfere with client communication with an attorney or with the Texas Department of State Health Services for the purposes of filing a grievance.

All staff and volunteers are instructed on the Client Grievance Procedure. Staff members make every effort to resolve the grievance informally by discussing the situation or circumstances with the client. Staff members who are involved will not be included in the acceptance, investigation or decision making concerning the grievance. Formal grievances made by client must be recorded in the grievance log within 24 hours (72 on the weekends). An incident report will be completed within 24 hours.

The governing authority or its designee takes action to resolve all complaints. The governing authority must forward all complaints that cannot be resolved to the Texas Department of State Health Services. All complaints and subsequent documentation, including final disposition, are documented and maintained in a central file.

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*First Step To Recovery is required by law to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of your protected health information and to provide our clients with notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your protected health information. Information may only be released with your written with a few exceptions which are listed below:*

**Treatment**

We may disclose your health care information to other healthcare professionals within our practice for the purpose of treatment, payment or healthcare operations.

**Payment**

We may disclose your health information to your insurance provider for the purpose of payment or healthcare operations.

**Workers' Compensation**

We may disclose your health information as necessary to comply with State Workers' Compensation Laws.

**Emergencies**

We may disclose your health information to notify, or assist in notifying, a family member, or another person responsible for your care, about your medical condition, or in the even of an emergency or your death.

**Public Health**

As required by law, we may disclose your health information to public health authorities for purposed related to: preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability; reporting child abuse or neglect; reporting domestic violence; reporting to the Food and Drug Administration problems with products and reactions to medications; and reporting disease or infection

exposure.

### **Judicial and Administrative Proceedings**

We may disclose your health information in the course of any administrative or judicial proceeding.

### **Law Enforcement**

We may disclose your health information to a law enforcement official for purposes such as identifying or locating a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person, complying with a court order or subpoena, and/or other law enforcement purposes.

### **Deceased Persons**

We may disclose your health information to coroners or medical examiners.

### **Organ Donation**

We may disclose your health information to organizations involved in procuring, banking or transplanting organs and tissues.

### **Research**

We may disclose your health information to researchers conducting research that has been approved by an Institutional Review Board

### **Public Safety**

It may be necessary to disclose your health information to appropriate persons in order to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a particular person or to the general public.

### **Specialized Government Agencies**

We may disclose your health information for military, national security, prisoner and government benefits purposes.

### *Your Health Information Rights*

- You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of your health information. Please be advised, however, that First Step To Recovery is not required to agree to the restriction/s you have requested.
- You have the right to have your health information received or communicated through an alternative method or sent to an alternative location other than the usual method of communication or delivery upon your request.
- You have the right to inspect and copy your health information.
- You have a right to request that First Step To Recovery amend your protected health information. Please be advised, however, that First Step To Recovery is not required to agree to amend your protected health information. If your request to amend your health information has been denied, you will be provided with an explanation of our denial reason/s and information about how you can disagree with the denial.
- You have a right to receive an accounting of disclosures of your protected health information made by First Step To Recovery.
- You have a right to a paper copy of this Notice of Privacy Practices at any time upon request.

### *Changes to this Notice of Privacy Practices*

First Step To Recovery reserves the right to amend this Notice of Privacy Practices at any time in the future and will make the new provisions effective for all information that it maintains. Until such amendment is made, First Step To Recovery is required by law to comply with this Notice.

First Step To Recovery is required by law to maintain the privacy of your health information and to provide you with notice

of its legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your health information. If you have questions about any part of this notice or if you want more information about your privacy rights, please contact the Program Director. If the Program Director is not available, you may make an appointment for a personal conference in person or by telephone which will take place within two (2) days.

### **Complaints**

Complaints about your privacy rights or how First Step To Recovery has handled your health information should be directed to the Program Director. If the Program Director is not available, you may make an appointment for a personal conference in person or by telephone which will take place within two (2) days.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this office handles your complaint, you may submit a formal complaint to:

#### **Submitting a Complaint against Substance Abuse or Narcotic Treatment Facilities**

Complaint hotline: (800) 832-9623

Form: Substance Abuse Facility Complaint Form (PDF, 922KB)

Email: SACG@dshs.texas.gov

Fax: (512) 834-6638

Mailing address:

Substance Abuse Facility Investigations ( MC 1979)  
Texas Department of State Health Services  
P.O. Box 149347  
Austin, TX 78714-9347