



State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
Department of Health Care Services



EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
GOVERNOR

DATE: June 26, 2017

MHSUDS INFORMATION NOTICE NO.: 17-030

TO: COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIRECTORS  
COUNTY DRUG & ALCOHOL ADMINISTRATORS  
COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA  
CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AGENCIES  
COALITION OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ASSOCIATIONS  
CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF ALCOHOL & DRUG PROGRAM EXECUTIVES, INC.  
CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES  
CALIFORNIA OPIOID MAINTENANCE PROVIDERS

SUBJECT: State Health Information Guidance (SHIG) for Sharing Behavioral Health Information in California

**PURPOSE**

This Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) Information Notice provides information on the SHIG and how it can be utilized and accessed.

**BACKGROUND**

The SHIG is an authoritative, but non-binding guidance from the State of California on when, where, and why mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) information can be exchanged between behavioral health providers and other providers involved in coordinating patient care. The SHIG also provides clarification of state and federal laws for non-state entities. The document is the product of the California Office of Health Information Integrity (CalOHII), which has statutory authority to interpret and clarify state law.

The SHIG was developed due to the confusion about the law that creates major barriers to sharing patient information. Providers often default to not sharing information due to uncertainty, risk avoidance, and liability concerns, even when it is legal to share information among health care providers. The appropriate and legal exchange of patient information helps support the triple aim: improving patient outcomes, improving overall patient satisfaction, and improving efficiency and reducing costs for organizations. The SHIG is broad in its scope, and is applicable to Physical Health

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Care Providers, MH Care Providers, SUD Providers, Emergency Service Providers, Caregivers and Care Coordinators, Social Services, Law Enforcement, and Payers.

The SHIG grew out of comprehensive research, drawing from an advisory group of broad stakeholders, including DHCS that reflect cross-industry insights and experience, to get a clear understanding of the problems different groups were facing in the field. The SHIG also incorporated feedback from patient and privacy advocacy organizations. The result of the research is the SHIG, a guidance containing 22 scenarios derived from real user stories, which clarify how laws and statutes apply to actual situations that arise for health care providers.

### **DISCUSSION**

The SHIG is a first step, laying the groundwork for an ongoing dialogue on how to improve appropriate sharing of health information. Patients see improved outcomes and improved overall satisfaction when health information is safely and legally shared between health care providers. Organizations also see improved efficiency and reduced costs when health information is safely and legally shared between health care providers.

Various webinars and marketing resources will be provided to counties and providers on the SHIG. The SHIG will be released to the public on **June 30, 2017** and can be found at on the California Health and Human Services website at:

[www.chhs.ca.gov/ohii/pages/shig.aspx](http://www.chhs.ca.gov/ohii/pages/shig.aspx).

To learn more about the SHIG, individuals can attend the following webinars:

**July 13, 2017, (10:00 a.m., PST)**

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3545587832725653763>

**July 25, 2017, (2:00 p.m., PST)**

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3718667455612327427>

If you have questions or feedback about the SHIG, please contact Marlies Perez at (916) 445-1943 or [marlies.perez@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:marlies.perez@dhcs.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Karen Baylor, Ph.D., LMFT, Deputy Director  
Mental Health & Substance Use Disorder Services