

You are entitled to be treated in a humane and dignified way at all times, and with full respect to:

- Personal Dignity
- Right to Privacy
- Right to Personal Property
- Civil Rights

Natchaug Hospital is committed to honoring the rights of all people receiving treatment in our programs.

If you are worried about the care you or a loved one is receiving at Natchaug Hospital, **please let us know**. You can contact the program staff, the program supervisor, our Client Rights Advocate, hospital senior management, or reach us through the **“Contact Us”** option on our website at [www.natchaug.org](http://www.natchaug.org). You can contact the Natchaug Hospital Client Rights Advocate at 860-456-1311 extension 69860.

We welcome your ideas about how to make our programs better. Ask any of our staff if you want more information and they will help you.

Specific Client Rights that are protected by law are reviewed on this page, and available in a booklet which you may request from staff.

You have the right to freedom from physical or mental abuse or harm; You have the right to a written treatment plan that is developed with your input and suited to your own personal needs, goals and aspirations; You should be informed of your rights by the institution, agency or program. Other rights you have include:

**Humane and dignified treatment:** You have the right to receive humane and dignified treatment at all times and with full respect to your personal dignity and privacy. A specialized treatment plan must be developed in accordance with your needs. Any treatment plan shall include, but not be limited to, reasonable notice of discharge, your active participation in and planning for appropriate aftercare. (See CGS §17a-542)

**Personal Dignity:** While in an inpatient facility, you have the right to wear your own clothing, maintain your own personal belongings (given reasonable space limitations), to have access to and spend your own money for personal purchases\*, and to be present during any search of your personal belongings. Any exception to these rights must be explained in writing and made a part of your clinical record. (See CGS §17a-548)

**Privacy & Confidentiality:** You have the right to privacy & confidentiality. Records that would identify your person, manner of treatment or your diagnosis cannot be given to any other person or agency without your written consent except under certain specified circumstances. All records maintained by the courts [as they relate to a recipient's treatment] shall be sealed and available only to respondent or counsel.\* No person, hospital or treatment facility may disclose or permit the disclosure of the identity, diagnosis, prognosis or treatment of any service recipient that would constitute a violation of state or

federal statutes concerning confidentiality.\* (See CGS §§17a-500 and 17a-688, 52-146f, and 42 CFR, part 2)

**Disclosure of Your Rights:** A copy of your rights shall be prominently posted in each ward where mental health services are provided. (See CGS §17a-548)

**Physician's Emergency Certificate & Commitment:** You, and/or your advocate or counsel, can find out more about when and how Commitment procedures may apply by reviewing the appropriate statutes. All persons admitted through a Physician's Emergency Certificate have the right, upon request, to a Probable Cause hearing within 3 business days from admission.

**Voluntary Admission:** All voluntarily admitted adult clients (age 16 or over) shall be informed, upon admission, of their ability to leave after filing a three day notice unless an application for commitment has been filed in a court of competent jurisdiction. All voluntarily admitted child clients (age 15 or under) shall be informed, upon admission, of their ability to leave after filing a five day notice unless an application for commitment has been filed in a court of competent jurisdiction. Different statutes apply depending on your placement in addictions treatment or treatment for a psychiatric disorder. (See CGS §§17a-495 et seq.; 17a-502; 17a-506; and 17a-682 to 17a-685, 54-56d)

**Visiting and Communication Rights:** You may receive visitors during scheduled visiting hours, and you have the right to visit and have private conversations with clergy, attorneys or paralegals of your choice at any reasonable hour. Facilities may reasonably maintain rules regulating visitors. Mail or other communications to or from a service recipient in any treatment facility may not be intercepted, read or censored.\* Any exceptions to rights regarding communications must be explained in writing, signed by the head of the facility (or designee) and made a part of your clinical record. (See CGS §§17a-546 and 17a-547)

**Restraint & Seclusion:** If conditions are such that you are restrained or placed in seclusion, you must be treated in a humane and dignified manner. The use of involuntary seclusion or mechanical restraints is allowed only when there is an imminent danger to yourself or others. Documentation of reasons for these interventions must be placed in your clinical records within 24 hours. Medications cannot be used as a substitute for a more appropriate treatment. (See CGS §17a-544)

**Medication, Treatment, Informed Consent & Surgical Procedures:** You, and/or your advocate or counsel, can find out more about what procedures apply by reviewing the appropriate statutes (see CGS §17a-543a-j). If you have been hospitalized under any sections of 17a-540 to 550, you shall receive a physical examination within 5 days of admission and at least once every year thereafter. Reports of such exams must be entered into your clinical record. (See CGS §17a-545). No medical or surgical procedures, psychosurgery or shock therapy shall be administered to any client without such client's written informed consent, except as provided by statute.\* A facility may establish a procedure that governs involuntary medication treatments, but any such decision shall be made by someone not employed by the treating facility and not until the client's advocate has had reasonable opportunity to discuss such with the facility.\* If a facility had determined to administer involuntary medication pursuant to statute, the client may petition the Probate Court to hold a hearing to decide whether to allow this intervention. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section (§17a-540 to 550), emergency treatment may be provided without consent if obtaining consent would cause a medically harmful delay. (See CGS §17a-543a-f)

**Access to Your Medical Record:** You, or your attorney, may have the right, upon written request, to inspect your hospital records. Unless your request is made in connection with litigation, a facility may refuse to disclose any portion of the record which the mental health facility has determined would create a substantial risk that you would inflict a life threatening injury to self or others, experience a severe deterioration in mental state,\* or would constitute an invasion of privacy of another. (See CGS §17a-548, 52-146f)

**Denial of Employment, Housing, Etc.:** You cannot be denied employment, housing, civil service rank any license or permit (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.\* (See CGS §17a-549)

**Filing of Grievances:** Recipients of services from Natchaug Hospital facilities or programs have the right to file a grievance if any staff or facility has: 1) violated a right provided by statute, regulation or policy; 2) if treated you in an arbitrary or unreasonable manner; 3) denied authorized services to you due to negligence, discrimination, or other improper reasons; 4) engaged in coercion to improperly limit your treatment choices; 5) unreasonably failed to intervene when your rights have been jeopardized in a setting controlled by Natchaug Hospital; or 6) failed to treat you in a humane or dignified manner. (See CGS §17a-451(u))

**Remedies of Aggrieved Persons:** If you have been aggrieved by a violation of §§17a-540 to 17a-549, you may petition the Superior Court within whose jurisdiction you reside for appropriate relief. (See CGS §17a-550)

**Other Rights** may be guaranteed by state or federal statute, regulations or policies that have not been identified in this list. You are encouraged to seek counsel to learn of or better understand how such statutes, regulations and/or policies might affect your rights.

Many of the rights of service recipients in facilities in Connecticut are specified in sections 17a-540 through 17a-550 of the Connecticut General Statutes. There may also be other rights provided by other state and federal statutes as well as by case law, but the ones identified in §§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 service recipients, unless otherwise provided.

In general, both public and private facilities are prohibited from depriving you of any of your personal, property or civil rights. These include the right to vote, to hold or convey property and contract, except in accordance with due process of law and unless you have been declared incapable pursuant to sections 45a-644 to 45a-662. Any finding of incapability should specifically state which civil or personal rights you are incapable of exercising.

**Joint Commission 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 complete an online Quality Incident Report Form available at [jointcommission.org](http://jointcommission.org).

Información sobre los  
Derechos de Pacientes es  
disponible en Español.

