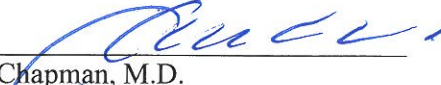
	Date Approved: <u>9/3/13</u> By: <u></u> Aaron Chapman, M.D. Interim Mental Health Director  Author: Kyree Klimist, MFT QA Administrator
POLICY: Secure Communications Policy	Date Revised: <u>MM/DD/YY</u>  Policy No.: _____

**POLICY:** Secure Communications Policy

It is the policy of Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services (ACBHCS) that all providers will comply with all HIPAA regulations. Because email has become a common mode of communication, it has become necessary to create policies around its use when communicating Protected Health Information (PHI).

**Secure Email Systems** safeguard the confidentiality and integrity of Sensitive Data. These technologies use encryption to protect Sensitive Data from unauthorized access.

ACBHCS currently uses encryption software within the ACBHCS email system. It requires no additional precautions to email between ACBHCS employees on the system.

When communicating PHI outside of the ACBHCS email system, all employees and providers are required to use an encryption program.

ACBHCS employees need to contact the Help Desk at 38181 (tie line) to request access and instructions on the use of the External Secure Email System. This system may be used to communicate with providers and clients.

All contracted providers must have their own secure email systems to ensure that all PHI is kept confidential and in compliance with HIPAA regulations and ACBHCS policies.

PHI communicated outside of an encrypted system is considered a breach and must be reported immediately to the Quality Assurance Office and the appropriate state and federal government offices. (See ACBHCS Breach Reporting Policy)

**Client Requests for Communication via Unsecured Means**

It is the providers' responsibility to explain the risks of unsecured communication to the client. Clients wishing to request unsecured communications may do so, however, providers should have the client sign an acknowledgement that the risks have been explained to them and this should be filed in the chart. Unsecured communication without this consent is a HIPAA violation.