

# County of Sonoma Crisis Stabilization Unit Questions and Answers

Please respond to each question aloud and definitively. I want to know, are County of Sonoma Crisis Stabilization Unit staff:

## 1. Accepting 5150s without confirming and verifying they are legitimate?

All 5150s are taken seriously. Someone in the community has identified individual as being at risk and needs evaluation. If the hold was incorrectly written, the team at CSU will evaluate and determine viability of the hold. If hold was incorrectly written but the individual meets criteria for danger to self, danger to others, or grave disability, the team at CSU will re-write the 5150. No one is turned away if a hold was incorrectly written if their safety is at risk. No one will be kept on a hold if they are not assessed as meeting the criteria for a 5150 hold.

## 2. What is the protocol for confirming they are legitimate, not with the reporter, but with the "client" once they have had a chance to stabilize after being illegally moved?

CSU completes a thorough clinical assessment to determine individual's mental status and level of risk before determining treatment plan. Individuals may be released prior to the expiration of the 72-hour treatment and evaluation if they meet the criteria under WIC 5152.

## 3. Fabricating 5150 reports?

There are numerous checks and balances involved evaluating a 5150; with input from the different members of the multi-disciplinary team at CSU; including psychiatrist, psych nurse, and licensed Behavioral Health clinician. The team determines if a 5150 is not indicated; not one person. It is not the decision of one person.

## 4. Allowing interns to write fabricated reports as if they were medical staff?

Staff interns, who are masters level working on their hours for licensure, are allowed to write 5150s only if they have completed our 5150 certification training.

## 5. Fabricating medical notes?

Medi-Cal regulations are very strict regarding documentation requirements. We conduct routine audits of charting. If someone were to produce what is believed to be a fabricated medical note, we would be required by regulation to conduct an investigation. They can file a grievance which will initiate an investigation. The grievance form can be found in English and Spanish online on the Sonoma County Behavioral Health website in the informing materials: <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/divisions/behavioral-health/contractor-resources/medi-cal-informing-materials>. It is also available in the lobby of the Crisis Stabilization unit.

It is also quite common for individuals who we evaluate to disagree with the content of the evaluation or medical notes and that is their right to do so. And they have a right to access their medical record, including a right to request an amendment or addendum. (Sonoma County Notice of Privacy Practices)

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- 6. Copying non-employee medical or law enforcement staff, or colleague's notes without confirming and verifying they are true? What is the protocol for identifying the source of the information in the notes?**

Medical records will quote the information provided by a third party and we will also complete our own evaluation.

- 7. What is the protocol for documenting one has not actually conversed with one of the clients in a report?**

Evaluation will be face to face. Sometimes individuals will not talk with CSU staff, and this will be noted in the Medical Record. In these cases, behaviors will be noted/document to determine safety and level of risk.

- 8. Refusing access to an adequate phone directory to every client which would necessitate adequate access to the internet?**

Everyone has a right to use of the phone. We will provide a phone to individuals if a call needs to be made. We will look up phone numbers for them. CSU does prohibit individuals using cell phones on the unit because of privacy issues, such as taking photos of other clients. If an individual is using the provided phone in an inappropriate manner (such as repeatedly calling 911 when there is no emergency) and the phone must be taken from them, CSU must file a "denial of rights" with the state.

- 9. Obfuscating access to a lawyer or other competent advocacy?**

All individuals have right to talk to advocate. They all have access to a "patients' rights advocate". This is the phone number 1-800-970-5816. It is posted in the CSU.

- 10. Testing County of Sonoma-provided advocates for competency?**

Sonoma County contracts for patients' rights services with an outside organization which is responsible for hiring and training their staff. If there are complaints about particular advocates, individuals may file a grievance and the issue will be investigated.

- 11. Denying access to a thorough handbook of one's rights and a clear explanation of how to advocate for oneself by omission or hiding it?**

Staff should not be denying access to the Patients' Rights handbook. If that is an issue, CSU leadership would certainly want to hear about it. Individuals should speak with the Patients' Rights Advocate, with a manager, or file a grievance if access is denied. Patients' Rights Handbooks are available at the CSU. They and poster can also be found here:

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/Pages/Office-of-Patients-Rights.aspx>. CSU management will remind all staff that individuals at the CSU must be given a handbook.

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### **12. Denying notice of a hearing and adequate consultation with a lawyer, or, if the client prefers, a County of Sonoma provided advocate, for a minimum of 48 hours before a hearing is scheduled?**

There is no requirement to notice individuals about a 5250 certification hearing 48 hours prior to the hearing. There is a requirement to notice them at the expiration of a 5150 if the person continues to meet criteria for an involuntary hold and a 5250 has been written. This might happen at any time prior to the hearing, typically at least one day before. Each individual for whom a 5250 hold is written is contacted by the Patients' Rights Advocate for consultation, to learn about their rights in the process, and to express their wishes prior to the hearing, usually on the same day as the hearing.

### **13. Holding a hearing before one has been allowed to talk to a lawyer and has been given every informational resource needed to procure one?**

The CSU is obliged to follow the above steps, including noticing the Patients' Rights Advocate about an impending 5250 hearing so that the Advocate has adequate time to meet with the individual prior to the hearing.

### **14. Deceiving people by telling them they will be released quicker if they agree to take medications they do not need?**

Staff often provide information about recommended treatment and how that may quicken the release process. For example, if the individual is experiencing a manic episode, staff may say that taking a mood stabilizer might control the mania, allowing the individual to be released and not have to go to a higher level of care such as a psychiatric hospital. Staff at the CSU cannot force medications or other treatment unless there is an imminent risk of physical harm to the individual or to others due to the person's behavior. That all said, there are times when the individual disagrees that the medications are needed, and if they are evaluated to still be unsafe if they were released, it may prolong the stay at the CSU and/or a hospital. There are other times when the medication does not work as expected and release does not happen as quickly as anticipated. The nuances in these conversations are important, and should not result in individuals at the CSU feeling that they are being coerced into treatment, however we acknowledge that it can happen. Individuals can ask to speak with the psychiatrist, the manager, the patients' rights advocate, or file a grievance if they feel that they are being deceived about their care.

### **15. Keeping the client area at a less comfortable temperature than the staff area?**

The heating and air conditioning system is a bit tricky at the CSU and staff are often lowering or raising temperatures based on requests from clients. If staff are not responding to requests to increase or lower the temperature, individuals can ask to speak to the patients' rights advocate or a manager.

### **16. Not providing clean, filtered water to clients?**

Clean tap water and cups are available to individuals on all of the CSU units to make water available at all times. Cold, filtered tap water is available upon request.

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### **17. Not supplying sweaters or socks? Or clean clothes in which to leave?**

The CSU has 2 washing machines and 2 driers specifically so that client clothing can be washed as needed. The CSU also stocks clothing and supplies it when individuals do not have adequate clothing at discharge.

### **18. Not holding high standards for client area cleanliness?**

The individual units at the CSU are cleaned by janitorial staff twice daily and as needed. Complaints about cleanliness should be reported to staff.

### **19. Does a non-employee ministry team member need to do anything beforehand to get access to the County of Sonoma Crisis Stabilization Unit or other mental health service provider so when they come to the outside entrance spontaneously and asks if a client wants a visitor, and someone does, they can enter?**

Family and significant others of individuals at the CSU are able to visit and provide support. Non-family or significant others of individuals at the CSU have to be vetted through the Sonoma County Human Resources Department. If interested, those organizations or individuals should contact management at the CSU at 707-576-8181 to initiate the process.

There are also volunteer positions available at the CSU that have specific job descriptions, and there are peer internship positions available for those who have been through the West County Community Services Peer Support Training Program.

### **20. A sign needs to be clearly displayed near the telephone for the clients with a list of five contact organizations, a brief description of each, and the phone numbers so a client can make contact if he or she needs advocacy or a friend. Do you need a list of organizations with ministry departments?**

We are unaware of this requirement. We are required to post information about patients' rights and the patients' rights phone number on each unit at the CSU. If organizations or individuals have resources for individuals served at the CSU, they should contact management at the CSU at 707-576-8181.