

# CareCertify LLC

## Mental Health Clinic Training Series

MHC-02

# Client Rights, Informed Consent & Intake

## *Participant Guide*

Mental Health Clinic Training Series · Audience: Clinic Staff · Clinicians · Practitioners · Front-Office · Support · CE Hours: 1.0

## Rights Protected, Trust Begun

Clients seeking mental health care keep their rights, and the clinic is responsible for protecting them. Intake — the first contact, paperwork, and welcome — is where the therapeutic relationship begins and where trust is won or lost. Chapter 245I sets out clients' rights, and every staff member helps protect them.

This guide covers client rights, informed consent, and making intake welcoming. When the clinic protects rights and builds trust from the first contact, clients are far more likely to engage in the care that helps them.

### Learning Objectives — by the end of this module you will be able to:

- Summarize client rights in a mental health clinic
- Explain informed consent
- Support participation and the right to refuse
- Make intake welcoming and reduce barriers
- Support grievances and protect dignity

## Section 1: Client Rights Under Chapter 245I

Clients in a mental health clinic keep their rights, set out under Chapter 245I, including the right to be treated with dignity and respect, to participate in their own treatment, to give informed consent, to privacy and confidentiality, to refuse services, and to voice grievances without retaliation. Clients must be informed of their rights, and a clinic may not require a client to waive a right as a condition of services. Protecting these rights is the responsibility of everyone in the clinic.

## Section 2: Informed Consent

Informed consent means a client understands and freely agrees to the treatment they receive. It requires real information — the nature of the services, their risks and benefits, and the alternatives — provided in a way the client can understand. Consent is ongoing, not just a signature at intake; clients can ask questions and change their minds. Special consent rules apply for minors and for certain treatments. Genuine informed consent respects the client's autonomy.

## Section 3: Participation in Treatment and the Right to Refuse

Clients have the right to actively participate in their treatment — helping set goals and shape the plan — and the right to refuse services after being told the consequences. Support their voice and choices rather than overriding them. When a client declines a recommendation, respect it and report it so the team can respond. Participation and choice aren't obstacles to care; they're part of effective, client-centered treatment.

## Section 4: Dignity, Respect, and Non-Discrimination

Every client deserves dignity, courtesy, and respect, and care free of discrimination or judgment based on their condition, identity, or background. Mental health stigma is a real barrier; treating mental health care as the health care it is, and clients as the people they are, helps. Protect privacy everywhere — the waiting room, the phone, and the record — and never discuss clients where others can hear.

## Section 5: The Intake Experience

Intake — the first contact, paperwork, and welcome — is where the therapeutic relationship begins. Many clients are anxious, ashamed, or unsure about seeking help, and the intake experience can make the difference between engaging and leaving. Meet clients with warmth, patience, and respect, explain the process and their rights in plain language rather than just handing over forms, and make the environment welcoming. A good intake reduces fear and builds the trust care depends on.

## Section 6: Reducing Barriers to Care

Many things keep people from getting mental health care: stigma, cost, language, transportation, complicated paperwork, and long waits. The clinic reduces barriers through language access (interpreters, translated materials), physical and communication accessibility, scheduling flexibility, and clear, patient communication. Help clients navigate paperwork, insurance, and the system. Reducing barriers improves access and equity — and a client who can reach care is a client who can be helped.

## Section 7: Grievances and Freedom From Retaliation

Clients have the right to voice grievances about their care and to receive a response, without fear of retaliation. Make sure clients know how to raise a concern, and never discourage or retaliate against someone for doing so. Treat complaints as useful information that helps the clinic improve. Supporting a client's voice respects their dignity and strengthens care.

## Section 8: Everyone's Role in Protecting Rights and Trust

Protecting client rights and building trust is everyone's job — from the front desk to the clinician to the billing office. Every interaction, from a phone call to a session, shapes whether a client feels respected and safe. Protect privacy, dignity, and consent in every interaction. Trust is built — or lost — in everyday moments, and the whole clinic shares responsibility for getting it right.

## Key Terms

Term	What it means
Client rights	The rights clients keep in a mental health clinic (Chapter 245I).
Informed consent	A client's understanding and free agreement to

	treatment.
Participation	A client's right to help shape their own treatment.
Right to refuse	A client's right to decline services after being told the consequences.
Barriers to care	Obstacles like stigma, cost, or language that limit access.
Intake	The first contact and process that begins the therapeutic relationship.

## Check Your Understanding

1. Name three client rights in a mental health clinic.
2. What does informed consent require?
3. Why is the intake experience so important?
4. Name three ways to reduce barriers to care.
5. Who is responsible for protecting client rights?

## What's Next

### Looking ahead

Next, MHC-03: Confidentiality, HIPAA & 42 CFR Part 2 in the Clinic covers protecting client information.