

 Office of Mental Health Official Policy Manual	Date issued 05/17/24	Page 1 of 5	Section # PC-522
	Section: Patient Care		
	Directive: Staff and Client Use of Shared iPads		
	Policy Owner: Medical Informatics, Technical Services		

A. Policy Statement

This policy applies to all Office of Mental Health (OMH) civil and forensic inpatient and outpatient programs that treat children, adolescents, and/or adults as well as residents at an OMH secure treatment facility (STF). For the purposes of this policy, the term “Client” includes adults and children who are patients in an OMH Psychiatric Center (PC), clients in an outpatient program, and residents in a STF. The purpose of this policy is to facilitate the use of shared iPads by individuals receiving treatment services in an OMH operated program and by staff who work within these settings.

B. Relevant Statutes and Standards

14 NYCRR 596
Public Health Law § 2999-dd
Electronic Signatures and Records Act (ESRA)

C. Definitions

1. *Profile* means a pre-determined group of approved applications on the iPad enabled for use by patients or staff.
2. *Telehealth* means two-way, real-time-interactive audio and video equipment to provide and support mental health services at a distance. For purposes of this policy, telehealth includes the provision of therapeutic services and forensic related work (e.g., court testimony, evaluations) by staff.
3. *Onsite iPad Technology Coordinator* means OMH Staff to facilitate access to iPads for therapeutic, recreational, educational, or language support services.
4. *Client Shared iPad Use Agreement* means a written agreement that must be signed by the Client and facility designee before Client iPad use. The agreement should clearly outline the Client’s responsibilities while using the iPad.
5. *Client consent* means a written informed consent document that the Client must sign before receiving services via telehealth.
6. *E-Signatures* means in compliance with Electronic Signatures and Records Act (ESRA), electronic signatures and electronic records used or accepted by OMH will have the same

legal validity and effect as hand-written signatures and paper-based documents.

D. Body of Directive

This policy consists of six components:

1. Onsite shared ipad technology coordinator
2. Client use of shared ipads
3. Staff use of shared ipads
4. Telehealth
5. iPad support
6. Related procedures and guidance

1) Onsite Shared iPad Technology Coordinator

- (a) Each facility must designate and train at least one staff to serve as on the onsite Shared iPad Technology Coordinator.
- (b) The Shared iPad Technology Coordinator must be aware of and have read the iPad Administration and Support policy.
- (c) The Shared iPad Technology Coordinator is responsible for:
 - (1) Tracking the iPad inventory assigned to patients and staff as well as any iPad accessories.
 - (2) Setting up the iPad(s) with the appropriate profile(s). A full list of profiles can be found on the [OMH Hub](#) or in the [iPad Guidance and Training](#) team.
 - (3) Ensuring iPads are stored in a designated location(s) and charged.
 - (4) Reporting to facility leadership if an iPad is missing, not functioning properly or if there is concern about profile safety/security.

2) Client Use of Shared iPads

The use of Shared iPads is intended to assist Clients to engage in treatment and recovery-oriented activities that support their overall health and wellness. Treatment teams should identify activities that can be done using an iPad to support a Client's treatment goals. These activities may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Therapeutic activities, as defined by facility policy;
- (b) Recreational activities, as defined by facility policy;
- (c) Educational activities, as defined by facility policy;

- (d) Wellness activities, as defined by facility policy;
- (e) Language support, such as video remote interpreting (VRI);
- (f) Virtual visits with family/friends or other therapeutic community supports (e.g., teacher, care manager);
- (g) Court appearances;
- (h) Participation in evaluations or treatment services via telehealth; or
- (i) Obtaining ESRA-compliant signatures

Facilities may establish time limits for Shared Client iPad use and designated locations where iPads can and cannot be used. Additionally, facilities should designate a location where patients can return iPads for charging at the end of the designated time. A copy of the [*iPad Use Guidelines*](#) should be posted on each Client unit so that they are accessible to staff and patients.

Shared iPads are available to clients as an extension of their treatment unless the treatment team determines it would be counter to their therapeutic needs. **Access to iPads should never be used in a punitive manner. OMH does not support any punitive behavioral interventions, including but not limited to denied access as a form of punishment or coercion.** Concerns regarding safety or any associated limitations regarding Client use shall be brought to the treatment team for discussion. If iPad use is prohibited, the Client's treatment team should document the reasons why iPad use is clinically contraindicated. Client's may use iPads independently, or with appropriate staff supervision, for approved activities. There should be ongoing assessment and determination related to client's therapeutic needs and ability to utilize technology safely.

Prior to patients initially using the iPad, staff should:

- (a) Familiarize themselves with the iPad use expectations and procedures as described in the [*iPad Use Guidelines*](#) document.
- (b) Show patients, as needed, how to operate the device including opening/closing applications and basic navigation.
- (c) Ensure the Client has signed an attestation form acknowledging agreement to use the iPad in accordance with OMH and facility policy prior to using an iPad.
- (d) Confirm the Client's identity and ensure the Client has signed the iPad agreement before distributing iPads for Client use.

Instructions for how staff can log into the iPad can be found in the [iPad Guidance and Training Team](#). iPads should be logged into a profile **prior** to being giving to a Client. Staff should never share login information with Clients. If a Client learns the iPad login information, staff must immediately report to facility leadership and the onsite iPad Technology Coordinator, who will follow procedures to reset the login information.

When providing patients with an iPad for an approved activity, staff should ensure the battery life is adequate for the intended session length. If the Client is using the iPad independently, staff will observe/check-in with the Client as designated by the facility (e.g., every 15 minutes).

When a Client is finished using the iPad, staff will follow the directions in the [iPad Use Guidelines](#) before providing the iPad to a different Client.

3) Staff Use of Shared iPads

The use of iPads by staff is intended to support a variety of activities including documentation, telehealth, or to fulfill other facility functional needs. Staff will follow guidance in the [iPad Use Guidelines](#) when using a shared iPad.

Staff will report to Treatment Team Leader/Program Manager, Onsite iPad Technology Coordinator and/or designee immediately if an iPad is missing or not functioning properly.

4) Telehealth

iPads may be used to provide treatment services to outpatient clients via telehealth. Prior to initiating telehealth services, clients must sign a consent form that informs them of the advantages and limitations of telehealth services. See Telemental health guidance for more information.

Outpatient staff can use iPads to provide services via telehealth (e.g., engagement, teaching therapeutic, supportive activities, cognitive remediation, video conferencing with community providers such as care managers). Staff must ensure logout of iPad between telehealth sessions.

Be available throughout the telemental health session to troubleshoot technical difficulties that impact connectivity.

5) iPad Support

For more information, please see the Client iPad and Shared Staff iPad Administration and Support, *Device-Admin-and-Support.pdf*, policy.

6) Related Procedures and Guidance

Guidance for the use of Telemental Health in Psychiatric Center Inpatient Units

iPad Client Use Agreement

iPad Use Guideline

iPad Sanitation Guidelines

Technical Notes for Shared iPads

iPad Inventory and Audit Controls