

# **SHEBDEB PSYCHIATRY & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

## **HIPAA AND EMAIL / SMS-TEXT CONSENT**

Effective Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **HIPAA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION CONSENT**

HIPAA is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. HIPAA was enacted by the U.S. government in 1996 to establish privacy and security protections for health information.

ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health uses reasonable safeguards to protect patient health information. Information maintained on our computer systems is encrypted.

Standard email services and SMS/text messaging are not necessarily encrypted. When you send an email or SMS/text message to ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health, or when the practice sends one to you, the information may be transmitted over the Internet without encryption. A third party may potentially access or read the communication during transmission. After a message reaches your email account or phone, another person may also be able to access it if they have access to your account, device, or phone.

Email and SMS/text messaging are convenient and commonly used methods of communication. Federal HIPAA guidance permits covered healthcare entities to communicate certain health information by unencrypted email or text when patients have been informed of the risks and consent to receiving such communications.

### **CONSENT TO EMAIL AND SMS/TEXT COMMUNICATION**

By consenting to electronic communication with ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health, you acknowledge the risks described above and authorize the practice to use email and/or SMS/text messaging for appropriate healthcare-related communications. Examples may include appointment reminders, appointment confirmations, requests for medication refills, administrative communications, and other communications related to your care, treatment, or payment.

ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health may forward or otherwise share emails or SMS/text communications when reasonably necessary for diagnosis, treatment, payment/reimbursement, healthcare operations, or other purposes permitted or required by law. Employees, medical staff, and other individuals who have a legitimate need to access information in order to provide services to you may have access to such communications.

Except as authorized or required by law, ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health will not intentionally forward your emails or SMS/text communications to unrelated independent third parties without your prior written authorization.

### **IMPORTANT LIMITATIONS OF EMAIL AND SMS/TEXT**

ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health will make reasonable efforts to review and respond to electronic communications promptly; however, staff may not read or respond to an email or text message immediately.

Do not use email or SMS/text messaging to report an emergency, an urgent psychiatric or medical concern, or a situation requiring an immediate response. In an emergency, call 911 or use the appropriate emergency service. For urgent matters that require prompt attention, use the practice's designated telephone contact or other instructed method of communication.

If you send a message that requires a response and do not receive a response within a reasonable period, it is your responsibility to follow up with ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health by telephone or another appropriate communication method.

### **PROTECTING YOUR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Because email can be used to transmit malicious software or viruses, patients should use appropriate security precautions, including maintaining current antivirus and security software on computers and devices used to access email.

Please carefully consider whether email or SMS/text messaging is appropriate for highly sensitive medical information, including information concerning sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, mental health, developmental disabilities, substance use, or other sensitive conditions.

Patients should also take reasonable steps to protect their own email accounts and mobile devices, including using strong passwords, device security features, and other safeguards designed to prevent unauthorized access.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND CONSENT**

ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health will use reasonable means to protect the privacy of your health information. However, because email and SMS/text messaging may be transmitted or stored without encryption and may be accessed by unauthorized persons under circumstances outside the practice's control, ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health cannot guarantee that electronic communications will remain confidential.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand this consent form and the risks associated with communicating health information by email and SMS/text messaging. I voluntarily consent to receive communications from ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health through email and/or SMS/text messaging under the conditions described above.

I understand that I should not use email or SMS/text messaging for emergencies or matters requiring an immediate response. I understand that I am responsible for following up with the practice if I do not receive a response within a reasonable period.

I understand that I may revoke this consent by notifying ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health in writing. Revocation will not affect communications already made in reliance upon this consent before the practice receives and processes the revocation.

Patient/Authorized Representative Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Practice: ShebDeb Psychiatry & Behavioral Health**

*Please retain a copy of this consent form for your records.*