

Universal Consent Form

Guide: How to talk to clients about the Universal Consent form

Basic information for providers

Intro: The general idea - the Universal Consent (UC) gives us permission to share clients' information with other agencies serving that client.

Update: There are only two types of personal information to make decisions about how to share: mental health and substance use information. There used to be a check box for HIV-related information, but now that's just part of medical and substance use history.

Reminder: Our goal is to have ALL clients sign the UC form and offer full consent.

Tips for having a constructive conversation

1. Reflect back the concerns you're hearing.
2. Try to answer as honestly as possible.
3. Remember that they have the right to say no, but that we also really want as many as possible to sign the consent form with full consent sharing.
4. **Sharing information is central to connecting clients to services available** – limited sharing means limited services.
5. Completion of the most recent consent form helps secure uninterrupted services as policies change over time.
6. Pointing to the list of organizations on the form can help clients understand the breadth of services that are available to them with their full consent.

Questions clients may ask and how you can respond

Q: What is this form?

A: This consent is a basic form that gives us permission to share your information with other agencies that are also serving you. Your permission allows us to provide you with the best care possible.

Q: Why do I have to sign it?

A: For us to help you as best as possible, we need you to tell us how we can use your personal information – this is your right. You get to decide how much information we can keep in our files and share with other people who can help you. Whatever you decide, we will only share your information if it's necessary.

Q: Is this form different than before?

A: The last version was written a couple years ago, so some of that information is outdated now. Also, fortunately, now there are many more services we can connect you with, so they're listed in the new form. Also, there are only two check boxes now – mental health and substance use information.

Q: What are the two checkboxes for?

A: They are for any help you can get related to mental health and substance use. By checking those boxes, it makes it easier for us to connect you with those services.

Q: Do I have to list family members on page 3?

A: That section is optional – it's there so that if we have trouble getting in touch with you, the people you list can help us continue to serve you. Putting someone's name there means that we can share your information with them.

Q: What if I don't sign it?

A: We will still help you, but it can really limit the services you can receive. Also, we still have to share some key information even you decide not to sign it, but only as necessary.

Q: Can I change my mind?

A: Yes, it's okay if you change your mind about these options in the future. For example, say you sign today to say that you're okay with us sharing both types of personal information, but then down the road you decide you're not okay with that, then you can let us know and we'll make that change.

Other questions clients may ask (pulled from the Complete Guide PowerPoint)

Q: Who can provide my information to the LA County health information exchange?

A: Your current, past, and future treating providers and organizations, and the California Department of Public Social Services.

Q: What are Health Information Exchanges?

A: They are electronic systems that allow data sharing.

Q: What information will be shared?

A: Information about:

- your personal characteristics*
- your medical history,*
- your mental or physical condition,*
- treatment and services you receive, and*
- your social service information (including CalFresh, General Relief, CalWORKs, Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants, Medi-Cal, and other public benefits that you may apply for).*

Q: I am in a justice-involved diversion or re-entry program. What information will you share with my probation officer?

A: The only information shared with your probation officer would be your name/identifying information and the date of when you started receiving services.

Q: What do I authorize you to do with my information?

- To see if you are eligible for programs or resources
- To enroll you in programs
- To coordinate your care and treatment
- To communicate and work with your other providers
- To connect you with social services
- To receive payment for services we provide
- To improve and evaluate our programs
- For other County program activities

Q: How do I change or cancel this Authorization Form?

- Notify your care team member that you want to change or cancel this authorization or contact the appropriate DHS Program Manager.
- A new Authorization Form or revocation form will be completed and signed by you to either change or cancel your information sharing.
- Should you wish to change or cancel your information sharing, the cancellation will not apply to information shared prior to receiving the updated Authorization or cancellation.