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From: Patrick Cork, Administrator

Governor Proclaims August 1-5, 2016, Client Rights Awareness Week

The Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services is pleased to announce that Governor Scott Walker has [proclaimed](#) August 1-5, 2016, as Client Rights Awareness Week. This proclamation recognizes the impact of 40 years of client rights protection for individuals receiving services for developmental disabilities, mental health, and substance use. The client rights law established a basic set of expectations regarding treatment and records privacy and access.

History of Client Rights Law

In 1972, a Wisconsin Supreme Court decision, *Lessard v. Schmidt*, set forth the rights of mental health patients. A list of client rights was included in legislation introduced and passed during a special session of the state legislature in June 1976. The bill was signed by Governor Patrick Lucey on July 29, 1976. The client rights law was published on August 4, 1976. It took effect in September.

The client rights law created Wis. Stat. §§ [51.30](#) and [51.61](#). It covers services delivered in a variety of inpatient and outpatient settings, including adult family homes, clinics, community-based residential facilities, and group homes. The law also applies to care and treatment facilities operated by the Department of Health Services (DHS).

The law required the Department of Health and Social Services (now DHS) to create administrative rules for a grievance procedure to ensure patient rights. The [Client Rights Office](#) was created to oversee the development and implementation of these administrative rules and the grievance process.

The following administrative rules were drafted and approved.

- [Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 92, Confidentiality of Treatment Records](#)
- [Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 94, Patient Rights and Resolution of Patient Grievances](#)

All patients must be informed of their client rights prior to receiving treatment. Client rights are subject to some restrictions under limited circumstances.

If patients believe their client rights have been violated, they may file a complaint at the provider level. Decisions at the provider level may be appealed to the DHS Client Rights Office for investigation and review. Patients may also take their client rights concern to court. Over 50,000 grievances have been addressed by DHS client rights staff since the client rights law took effect.

Client Rights Office Open House

The DHS Client Rights Office is holding an open house August 4, 2016. For more information, please contact the client rights supervisor.

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