



DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
Olympia, Washington

TITLE: CLIENT INTERNET ACCESS AT THE RHCs POLICY 6.17

Authority: Chapter 71A RCW

BACKGROUND

The Internet has become a commonly used source of information and entertainment. Individuals receiving services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) who reside at the Residential Habilitation Centers (RHC) may desire to access the Internet. Those individuals who are capable of accessing information through the Internet should not be discouraged from doing so. If an individual residing at a RHC desires to access the Internet and has the resources and computer equipment to do so, RHC staff will work with the individual and his or her legal representative toward that goal, subject to appropriate limitations as described below.

PURPOSE

This policy describes the expectations and requirements for individuals residing at the RHCs regarding:

- a. The private use of computers;
- b. Unsupervised Internet access; and
- c. Internet access made available through RHC power sources.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all RHC staff and adult individuals residing at the RHCs.

Note: Individuals of school age requiring access to the Internet as part of their educational program are outside the scope of this policy. RHCs may allow the use of state-owned computers for such students and shall monitor their Internet usage to ensure that it is being used for educational purposes.

POLICY

A. In assisting individuals who reside in a RHC to access the Internet, RHC staff may determine the most appropriate location within the facility that provides the person as much privacy as possible while not requiring additional expense to the facility. All aspects of the client's Internet access shall be independent of and separate from agency computer equipment, firewalls, servers and networks.

B. Role of Client, Legal Representatives/Guardians, and Family Members

It is the responsibility of the client or his/her legal representative/guardian or family members to:

1. Purchase and provide all necessary components of an Internet accessible system, including all hardware, software, Internet service providers, firewalls, and antivirus and other security programs;
2. Provide the Internet connection (phone line, cable television, satellite dish, wireless, etc.); and
3. Maintain and update the Internet computer systems, including security software.

C. While the state may choose to offer a power source to enable a client to access the Internet under the conditions described in this policy, RHC funds should not otherwise be expended to assist a client to access or use their Internet connection.

PROCEDURES

A. Notification of Legal Representatives and Family Members - Release of Liability

1. RHC staff will notify a client's legal representative/guardian when the client expresses a desire to have a computer with Internet access. Staff will provide the client and the legal representative(s) with a copy of this policy to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities relating to cost, access, maintenance, updating, and monitoring of Internet usage.

If a client who seeks Internet access does not have a legal representative, RHC staff may require notification of a family member in order to provide access to a power source for Internet connection.

2. As part of the RHCs' agreement to provide access to a power source, the client and his/her legal representative or family member, if applicable, will sign a release of liability form for the State of Washington for any costs associated with

the client's equipment/Internet access and any claims arising as a result of the individual's access to the Internet (see Attachment A for sample form).

B. Limitations on Internet Access

1. It is the responsibility of the client and his/her legal representative to determine any parameters or limitations on lawful access to the Internet, unless limitations on Internet access were already established by a court, including how expenses will be paid from the client's available resources. RHC staff will not establish such parameters except as provided for below.
2. RHC staff shall not assist or encourage clients to access inappropriate Internet sites. If a client chooses to access such sites, and the Superintendent, in his or her sole discretion, determines that such access is negatively impacting the client or others, the Superintendent may withhold the RHC power source that supports the Internet access.
3. Clients should not be allowed to engage in any Internet-related activity that is against the law or that would constitute abuse of persons with developmental disabilities. If any unlawful activity is suspected, RHC staff must notify the appropriate authorities and follow established policies related to protecting others from harm. The Superintendent may terminate Internet access pending investigation. If it is determined that abuse of vulnerable individuals or criminal acts occurred, Internet access shall be withheld as appropriate.
4. For individuals with significant challenging behaviors, including, but not limited to, physical aggression, inappropriate sexual behaviors, and sexual deviancy issues, it may be necessary to supervise Internet access or to restrict access to Internet sites that may stimulate or worsen those behaviors. Refer to DDD Policy 5.15, *Use of Restrictive Procedures*, for more information. Any such restrictions must be documented in the client's Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP) according to policy requirements.

C. Individual Training on Proper Use of the Internet

1. Necessary training elements related to Internet access and use will be identified or defined in the Individual Habilitation Plan (IHP) and/or Individual Support Plan (ISP) process.
2. Payments made by the client or his/her legal representatives, or family member for Internet access will be documented in the client's annual financial plan.
3. All skill development programs involving individual Internet access shall occur on computers separate and independent from agency computers, firewalls, servers

and networks (with the exception of school age children and youth as identified under Scope).

4. Individual training by RHC staff is subject to staff availability and resources.

EXCEPTION

No exceptions to this policy may be granted without the prior written approval of the Division Director.

SUPERSESSSION

None

Approved: /s/ Linda Rolfe
Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities

Date: May 1, 2008

Attachment A – Sample Release of Liability Form