



Fortis Behavioral Health
220 Wintergreen Dr., Suite B
Lumberton, NC 28358
910-536-1719
910-668-8048

Email/Electronic/Text Messaging Consent and Guidelines

Fortis Behavioral Health offers courtesy text messaging reminders of your upcoming appointments, through our patient portal. Per your wireless service plan, text messaging charges may apply. You may choose to opt out of this by signing below. If you would like to receive these text message reminders, kindly update your cell phone number to ensure we have the most current number on file. Appointment reminders are a courtesy and not a guarantee. It is the patient's responsibility to keep all scheduled appointments and to arrive on time. Failure to do so may result in a shorter session or a canceled appointment. Canceled appointments will be charged in accordance to the cancellation policy you signed when you became a patient of Fortis Behavioral Health.

I understand and agree

As a supplement to your in-office or telemedicine appointments, Fortis Behavioral Health is inviting you to use email/electronic/text messaging to communicate with our practice. You should recognize, however, that as with all forms of communication, especially electronic communication, privacy of email/electronic/text/text messaging communications cannot be assured. Set forth below are policies outlining when and how email/electronic/text/text messaging should be utilized to reduce the risk to your privacy and to enhance communication as well as a place for you to acknowledge your consent to its use. Your decision to utilize email/electronic/text messaging is strictly voluntary and your consent may be rescinded at any time. Barring emergencies or other unusual circumstances, email/electronic/text messaging will be accessed by a provider or a staff member at least once daily during normal business hours. Ordinarily, you may expect any required response within 24 business hours after your email/electronic/text messaging is accessed.

When may I use email/electronic/text messaging to communicate with Fortis Behavioral Health?

- Prescription refill requests
- Appointment scheduling
- Non-urgent questions regarding your treatment (e.g. clarification on medication regimen, logistical questions)
- Other matters not requiring an immediate response

I understand and agree

When should I NOT use email/electronic/text messaging to communicate with Fortis Behavioral Health?

Email/electronic/text messaging should never be used:

- In an urgent or emergent situation, or in an emergency, or in any circumstance that you think might constitute an urgent or emergent situation.
- Never use email/electronic/text messaging communication in urgent situations. When in doubt, please err on the side of assuming that your problem is urgent and seek emergency care by calling 911 or going to nearest emergency room.
- If you are experiencing any urge to harm yourself or others or thoughts of doing either.
- If you are experiencing a severe or concerning medication reaction, or what you think you might be.
- If you think you may need an immediate response (i.e. sooner than 24 business hours after your email/electronic/text messaging is accessed)

I understand and agree



FORTIS

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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What happens to my messages?

- Email/electronic/text messages may be saved and maintained as a permanent part of your medical record
- As part of your permanent record, they may be released along with the rest of the record upon your authorization or when your provider is otherwise legally required to do so.
- Messages may be seen by staff for the purpose of filing or carrying out requests (e.g., appointment scheduling) or when our providers are away from the office.

I understand and agree

What are the advantages to using email/electronic/text messaging?

- Unlike trading voicemail messages, email/electronic/text messaging allows you to see exactly the question your provider is responding to and to have a written record of that exchange for future reference.
- Email/electronic/text messaging allows for the rapid transmission of forms or other paperwork such as information regarding your treatment or condition
- Email/electronic/text messaging allows your provider to share patient handouts and other valuable resources (websites, e.g.) that you can then utilize for easy future reference.
- We provide links to other sites deemed to present information of value as a convenience to patients. Fortis Behavioral Health, however, is not responsible for the accuracy or currency of the information offered there, which may change at any time without notice to it, nor for the privacy practices of the owners of the site. Your link to any such site is at your own risk.
- Email/electronic/text messaging also can allow your provider to send you a summary of your treatment plan, to improve your understanding of the plan and the reasons for their recommendations, to provide a mechanism for follow-up questions if needed, and to allow easy future reference.

I understand and agree

What are the risks of using email/electronic/text messaging? Risks of communicating via email/electronic/text messaging include but are not limited to the following:

- Email/electronic/text messaging may be seen by unintended viewers if addressed incorrectly
- Email/electronic/text messaging may be intercepted by hackers and redistributed
- Someone posing as you could access your information.
- Email/electronic/text messaging can be used to spread computer viruses
- There is a risk that emails/electronic messages may not be received by either party in a timely matter as, for example, if it were caught by junk/spam filters
- Emails/electronic messages can be circulated and stored by unintended recipients
- Statements made via email/electronic/text messaging may be misunderstood, thus creating miscommunication and/or negatively affecting treatment
- There may be an unanticipated time delay between messages being sent and received, which could result in a worsening of your problem(s)
- Email/electronic/text messaging does not permit our providers to see you or to hear your voice, or, of course, to see your face, and they may thus be denied information that could be important to diagnosis
- At times email/electronic/text messaging can become excessive and become counter-therapeutic for you in your treatment. If this occurs, your provider will speak with you directly to address these concerns and work with you to create an individualized treatment agreement regarding email/electronic/text messaging.

I understand and agree

What are my obligations?

- I will let my provider know immediately if my email address/phone number changes.
- If I do not receive a response from Fortis Behavioral Health in the time frame indicated (within 24 business hours after your email/electronic/text messaging is accessed), I will contact the office by telephone at 910-5336-1719 if a response is needed.
- I will use email/electronic/text messaging communication only for the purposes stated above.
- I will not use email/electronic/text messaging to transmit discriminatory, harassing, sexually oriented, offensive or otherwise illegal or improper messages or to attempt to download malware or unlawful or damaging software onto the Fortis Behavioral Health system.
- I will advise my provider in writing should I decide that I would prefer not to continue communicating via email/electronic/text messaging.
- I understand that email/electronic/text messaging may only be used to supplement my appointments with my provider and not as a substitute for them.
- I understand and agree that excessive electronic communication or electronic communication requiring extensive time, research or review may be subject to pro-rated fee \$100/hr or \$5/min (Note: Your provider will discuss this with you if she determines communication to be excessive or requiring compensation at pro-rated fees).

I understand and agree

What steps can I take to protect my privacy?

- Do not use your work computer to communicate with your provider as your employer has a right to inspect emails sent through the company's system.
- Do not use a shared email account to transmit messages.
- Log out of your email/electronic/text messaging account if you will be away from your computer.
- Carefully check the address before hitting "send" to ensure that you are sending your message to the intended receiver.
- Avoid writing or reading emails/electronic messages on a mobile device in a public place.
- Avoid accessing email/electronic/text messaging on a public Wi-Fi hotspot.
- Make certain that your email/electronic/text messaging is signed with your first and last name and include your telephone number and date of birth to avoid possible mix up with patients with same or similar names.

I understand and agree

What steps has Fortis Behavioral Health taken to protect the privacy of my email/electronic/text messaging communications? Fortis Behavioral Health:

- Will provide access to a secure patient portal prior to, or just after you establish care with our office. This is an optional end-to-end encryption for an email/electronic/text messaging system that we encourage you to use within the patient portal section of your electronic medical record. It is more private and secure than regular email.
 - Additional information about the security features of the ChARM electronic medical record used for the practice can be requested by emailing info@fortisbehavioralhealthnc.com
- Has set up a password protected screensaver on all work computers.
- Has educated staff on the appropriate use and protection of email/electronic/text messaging.



- Has excluded family members from access to personal work computers.
- Has determined that your provider will not forward patient email to third parties without your express consent.

I understand and agree

Detailed discussion of email/electronic/text messaging communication options at Fortis Behavioral Health, including their advantages and disadvantages:

- Within the patient portal section of your electronic medical record, Fortis Behavioral Health, has provided end-to-end encryption for an email/electronic/text messaging system that we encourage you to use. "Encryption" is the process of converting information or data into a code, especially to prevent unauthorized access. One way you can engage with your provider outside of appointments is through email/electronic/text messaging via a patient portal account and included encryption tool. We strongly encourage you to do so.
- Email/electronic/text messaging allows you to communicate conveniently with your provider, and they with you. The nature of communications between yourself and your provider, however, is deeply personal and profoundly private. If an unauthorized person manages to obtain information of the kinds we exchange, it could cause both you and them considerable harm. Even apart from its content, the very fact of the communication is your business and theirs, not anyone else's. Fortis Behavioral Health, is acutely aware of and conscientious about protecting your privacy. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you utilize our encryption messaging system built into your patient portal in an effort to minimize security risks to your private information. While no form of communication, including electronic communication, is risk-free, in the present state of the technology encryption is the best, most secure way to protect the privacy of the information we share with each other via email/electronic/text messaging. You deserve that protection and should take advantage of it.
- As a busy clinician with many responsibilities, your provider cannot respond immediately to every patient communication. They try, nevertheless, to reply as quickly as reasonably possible to patient questions and requests. Email/electronic/text messaging is almost always much faster than telephone communication during the clinic day, since email/electronic/text messaging can be more easily addressed "on the fly," such as between patient appointments, for example. Hence, your provider encourages you to use email/electronic/text messaging to contact them and, again, urges you to do so through the encrypted patient portal that Fortis Behavioral Health provides. Because of the real drawbacks of the encrypted email/electronic/text messaging system available through the patient portal, however, your provider does offer an alternative email system that can be accessed directly from the patient's email, one that does NOT offer end-to-end encryption, info@fortisbehavioralhealthnc.com.
- Messages transmitted from your regular/personal email to Your provider's email address are unencrypted. As such, your provider must warn you that the security and privacy of such messages, either before they arrive at or once they leave the secured system, are less well-protected than when you use encrypted messaging through the patient portal. That is, if you decide to use your regular/personal email, you and we face greater risk that some unauthorized person might learn of our relationship and of the contents of our communications. Patients who utilize a personal email/electronic/text messaging system must understand and acknowledge these risks, and accept all responsibility for any security breaches, data loss, or interception of their private medical information.

I understand and agree



PLEASE CHOOSE ONE OR BOTH OF THE OPTIONS FOLLOWING BASED ON YOUR SELECTION FOR COMMUNICATION:

OPTION 1: CONSENT TO EMAIL/ELECTRONIC/TEXT MESSAGING USE FOR THOSE DECLINING TO USE ENCRYPTED EMAILS/ELECTRONIC MESSAGING (i.e. if you prefer to use your own personal email account, cell phone texting, etc. instead of the formal/encrypted patient portal):

By signing below, I consent to the use of UNENCRYPTED email/electronic/text messaging communication between myself, (First and Last Name as Printed Below), and Fortis Behavioral Health. I understand that I could utilize an encrypted messaging system via the Electronic Medical Record instead, if I so choose. I recognize that, either way, there are risks to the use of email or electronic messaging, and despite Fortis Behavioral Health’s best efforts, they cannot absolutely guarantee confidentiality. I recognize, however, that the risks to my privacy are greater when I decline to use encryption/encrypted email/electronic/text messaging. After considering the risks and benefits, however, I have decided to use unencrypted mail to communicate with mt provider. I understand and accept the higher risk that goes with this decision. I also understand and agree to the policies for email use outlined in this document. I further agree to follow these policies and agree that should I fail to do so, my provider may cease to allow me to use email or electronic messaging to communicate with them. I also understand that I may withdraw my consent to communicate via email or electronic messaging at any time by notifying Fortis Behavioral Health in writing via letter or email/electronic/text message.

OPTION 2: CONSENT TO EMAIL USE FOR THOSE ELECTING TO USE ENCRYPTION/ENCRYPTED EMAILS/ELECTRONIC MESSAGING (i.e. if you prefer to only communicate through the formal/encrypted patient portal and NOT through personal email, cell phone texting, etc.):

By signing below, I consent to the use of ENCRYPTED email communication between myself, (First and Last Name as Printed Below), and my provider. I understand that I could utilize an unencrypted messaging system via my own personal email/texting instead, if I so choose. I recognize that, either way, there are risks to the use of email or electronic messaging, and despite Fortis Behavioral Health’s best efforts, they cannot absolutely guarantee confidentiality. I elect to use encrypted email to reduce my risk, even though I know I cannot eliminate my risk altogether. I also understand and agree to the policies for email use outlined in this document. I further agree to follow these policies and agree that should I fail to do so, my provider may cease to allow me to use email or electronic messaging to communicate with them. I also understand that I may withdraw my consent to communicate via email or electronic messaging at any time by notifying Fortis Behavioral Health in writing via letter or email/electronic/text message.

Option 1

Option 2

Patient Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of SIGNER: _____

Relationship to patient is not signed by the patient: _____