

Charleston Dorchester
Mental Health Center
Cell Phone use in State Vehicles

Cell phones have become a valuable and necessary tool for providing mental health services in the community. They provide a link between staff members and public safety resources, such as police, EMS, and fire. While traditional land-line telephone services should be used whenever possible, cells allow staff to contact the MHC and provide immediate case management services when waiting is not possible or is detrimental.

A number of studies, however, indicate that using a cellular phone while driving may put an employee and others at risk. As a result there have been lawsuits filed against employers as well as employees for allegedly harming someone while driving and using a cell phone for business at the same time. It is therefore the policy of this organization that except in emergency situations no cell phone may be used while a driving state vehicle and CDMHC cells may not be used while driving any vehicle. Additionally, it is never allowable to send text messages while driving. In non-emergent situations when it is detrimental to wait for a land-line or delay a call staff should pull off the roadway onto a safe area and completely stop before making or accepting a cellular call.

Emergency situations are defined as those rare occasions when an employee or other person is at risk of physical harm and needs to immediately contact a public safety official/agency or is lost in an area that the employee believes poses a physical risk if he or she stops the vehicle to make a call to obtain driving directions. Under these circumstances an emergency cell call may be made while driving. When making an emergency call while driving:

- > Use speed dialing if possible
- > Keep your eyes on the road while talking
- > Use hands-free feature if available

Employees are expected to operate vehicles in as safe a manner as possible and should never place themselves at risk for business needs.


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Date