

How MRS Safeguards Your Personal Information

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) helps individuals with disabilities prepare for, find and keep a job. To help you obtain employment, MRS must gather needed information. You may have questions about how the confidentiality of this information is protected. This fact sheet should answer most of your questions. If you have additional questions, please ask an MRS counselor by contacting 1-800-605-6722 (toll free, voice).

Why does MRS need information about me?

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, allows MRS to collect, use and release information needed to:

- Process your application.
- Determine your eligibility for services.
- Assess your need for services.
- Develop and carry out your employment plan.
- Assist you with job placement.

MRS is legally required to create standards to safeguard the confidentiality of your personal information.

What safeguards does MRS have in place to protect the privacy of my records?

All information you give MRS is protected in confidential electronic or paper records. Only individuals involved in your rehabilitation program are allowed access to information about you. Personal information that MRS shares with other agencies is clearly marked confidential and not for re-release. If you are over 18 and do not have a legal guardian, information cannot be shared with family members or your representative without your written permission.

If MRS receives information about you from another source, MRS will release that information only under the conditions established by the other agency.

Will my records and conversations with my MRS counselor be kept confidential?

All discussions with your counselor are confidential. Your counselor will release information in your records only to those agencies directly involved in your rehabilitation program. In those instances, information that will be shared must be essential to assist in your rehabilitation program. Information regarding your disability is not provided to employers unless you give us written permission to talk with an employer.

MRS cannot release medical information about you if it comes from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or Social Security Administration. Further, information regarding drug and alcohol addiction and severe communicable diseases such as HIV, AIDS or hepatitis C cannot be released without your informed written consent.

Do I have a right to see my records?

You may review information in your case file if you make this request in writing. However, there are two circumstances when more than your written request is required:

- (1) Information that has been provided by other agencies may be disclosed only with their permission.
- (2) Certain information – such as technical, medical or psychological reports – may have to be provided to you through a health professional or other representative.

What if I think something in my records is wrong?

If you tell MRS that some information in your file is misleading or inaccurate, we will carefully consider your reasons for believing the record is incorrect. Obvious errors will be corrected.

However, information regarded by the MRS counselor as accurate and necessary will remain in your file. In such cases, a note that you requested the information be amended will be placed in your file. In addition, you may submit your own statement of what happened. This will also be placed in your file.

What if I don't want to share information about myself with MRS?

Your MRS counselor will discuss with you the need for MRS to gather information about you. You can refuse to grant permission for MRS to obtain information about you from another agency. However, your refusal may result in MRS being unable to proceed with your case. This could result in your case being closed.

Do I have to give MRS my Social Security number?

The Privacy Act of 1974 permits Michigan Rehabilitation Services to use your Social Security number to identify you in its records system. MRS also uses your Social Security number to verify wages and the status of any Social Security benefits you may be receiving.

Your Social Security number is particularly important to MRS if you are receiving federal disability benefits. As a Social Security recipient, you are eligible for special programs such as Ticket to Work, Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) plans, expedited reinstatement, and other work incentives. In addition, MRS can be reimbursed by the Social Security Administration for the services MRS provides to you, resulting in a substantial savings to Michigan taxpayers.

MRS requires that you provide an accurate Social Security number, date of birth and legal name. If you are a resident alien, we require that you have a work visa. Failure to provide your Social Security number and other key information could delay or keep MRS from assisting you with employment.

Are there instances when MRS can share information about me without my permission?

MRS can release information in your case file without your written consent:

- If required by federal law or regulation.
- If required by judicial order.
- In response to investigations for law enforcement, fraud or abuse.
- In situations involving abuse, neglect, exploitation, or safety to protect you or others.
- Under statewide interagency agreements to coordinate wage data and verify Social Security benefit status.
- For audit, evaluation and research for purposes related to the vocational rehabilitation program.

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*TTY users may contact MRS by dialing 711 and providing the relay operator with the MRS toll free number.

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