

Know Your Rights: Healthcare

This fact sheet is for educational purposes only. Nothing here should be considered legal advice. Please consult a lawyer for more specific information.

Updated as of March 2025

Health Insurance

- **MassHealth**

- The main public medical coverage program for residents of Massachusetts.
- Includes Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- To be eligible you must:
 - Be a Massachusetts resident (no permanent address required)
 - Meet financial requirements
- MassHealth covers:
 - Annual well check exams
 - Visits with specialists
 - Mental health services
 - And more

- **Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP)**

- For children, residents of Massachusetts (younger than 19) who:
 - Aren't eligible for MassHealth
 - Don't have other health insurance; there are no income requirements

- **If you don't have insurance**

- You can still receive emergency medical care, but will be expected to pay the full cost

Visiting the Doctor

- **You have the right to:**

- Choose the gender of the healthcare provider who examines you (in non-emergency situations)
- Refuse to take part in research, be examined, watched, or treated by students or other facility staff
- Receive informed consent (the right not to be treated unless you understand and agree to treatment)
- Receive emergency treatment
- Receive privacy during treatment
- Receive written information about emergency contraception and take emergency contraception if you are a victim of rape
- Healthcare providers will only treat you without your permission in life-threatening emergencies

- **Privacy and Disclosure**

- Healthcare providers are required by law to keep your healthcare information private
- You have the right to ask for restrictions on how your health information is used or shared for treatment, payment, or health care operations

Rights Violated?

You have the right to file a complaint about the care you receive and there are different state agencies responsible for complaints for different types of health care providers

- If you have a complaint about a nurse, physicians assistant, pharmacist, dentist or other health care professional
 - You have the right to file a complaint with the Bureau of Health Professions Licensure:
 - <https://healthprofessionlicensing.mass.gov/public-complaints>
- If you have a complaint about a physician or psychiatrist
 - You have the right to file a complaint with the Board of Registration in Medicine:
 - <https://medboard.mass.gov/public-complaints>
- If you have a complaint against a health care facility
 - You have the right to file a complaint with the Division of Health Care Facility Licensure and Certification
 - <https://www.mass.gov/health-care-facilities-consumer-information>
- **Privacy Violation**
 - If you believe someone violated your health privacy rights file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights:
 - <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/smartscreen/main.jsf>
- **Legal Support:**
 - Mass Legal Answers Online
 - <https://www.masslao.org/>
 - Mass Bar Association Dial a Lawyer
 - First Wednesday of the month, 5:30-7:30 PM
 - (617) 338-0610

Other Resources

- **MA Appleseed Homeless Youth Handbook**
 - <https://www.homelessyouth.org/en/us/massachusetts>
- **MassHealth Plans and Enrollment Guide**
 - <https://www.mass.gov/masshealth-plans-and-enrollment-guide>
- **Children's Medical Security Plan**
 - <https://www.mass.gov/childrens-medical-security-plan>
- **Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program**
 - <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/women-infants-children-nutrition-program>
- **Emergency Mental Health Help**
 - Call Massachusetts Behavioral Healthline at (844) 773-244

