

Washtenaw County Community Mental Health

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS - CLINICAL RECORDS – (policy)

PURPOSE

Information on the unacceptable use of some abbreviations and symbols in clinical records.

POLICY

Use of abbreviations on the Official DO NOT USE List is prohibited.

DEFINITIONS

Abbreviation - any symbol or group of letters used in place of a complete spelling of a word or set of words.

PROCEDURES

(see procedures manual)

REFERENCES

- Joint Commission standards

EXHIBITS

- A. Prohibited Abbreviations

Exhibit A – Prohibited Abbreviations

Official “Do Not Use” List¹

Do Not Use	Potential Problem	Use Instead
U,u (unit)	Mistaken for “0” (zero), the number “4” (four) or “cc”	Write "unit"
IU (International Unit)	Mistaken for IV (intravenous) or the number 10 (ten)	Write "International Unit"
Q.D., QD, q.d., qd (daily) Q.O.D., QOD, q.o.d, qod (every other day)	Mistaken for each other Period after the Q mistaken for "I" and the "O" mistaken for "1"	Write "daily" Write "every other day"
Trailing zero (X.0 mg) ² Lack of leading zero (.X mg)	Decimal point is missed	Write X mg Write 0.X mg
MS MSO ₄ and MgSO ₄	Can mean morphine sulfate or magnesium sulfate Confused for one another	Write "morphine sulfate" Write "magnesium sulfate"

¹The prohibited list applies to all orders, preprinted forms, and medication-related documentation. Medication related documentation can be either handwritten or electronic.

² A “trailing zero” may be used only where required to demonstrate the level of precision of the value being reported, such as for laboratory results, imaging studies that report size of lesions, or catheter/tube sizes. It may not be used in medication orders or other medication-related documentation.