

**§ 131E-141. Inspection.**

(a) The Department shall inspect home care agencies in accordance with rules adopted by the Commission to determine compliance with the provisions of this Part and the rules established by the Commission.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 8-53, "Communications between physician and patient," or any other provision of law relating to the confidentiality of communications between physician and patient, the representatives of the Department who make these inspections may review any writing or other record in any recording medium which pertains to the admission, discharge, medication, treatment, medical condition, or history of persons who are or have been clients of the agency being inspected unless that client objects in writing to review of that client's records. Physicians, psychiatrists, nurses, and anyone else involved in giving treatment at or through an agency who may be interviewed by representatives of the Department may disclose to these representatives information related to any inquiry, notwithstanding the existence of the physician-patient privilege in G.S. 8-53, "Communication between physician and patient," or any other rule of law; provided the client has not made written objection to this disclosure. The agency, its employees, and any person interviewed during these inspections shall be immune from liability for damages resulting from the disclosure of any information to the Department. Any confidential or privileged information received from review of records or interviews, except as noted in G.S. 131E-124(c), shall be kept confidential by the Department and not disclosed without written authorization of the client or legal representative, or unless disclosure is ordered by a court of competent jurisdiction. The Department shall institute appropriate policies and procedures to ensure that this information shall not be disclosed without authorization or court order. The Department shall not disclose the name of anyone who has furnished information concerning an agency without the consent of that person. Neither the names of persons furnishing information nor any confidential or privileged information obtained from records or interviews shall be considered "public records" within the meaning of G.S. 132-1, " 'Public records' defined." Prior to releasing any information or allowing any inspections referred to in this section, the client must be advised in writing by the licensed agency that the client has the right to object in writing to release of information or review of the client's records and that by an objection in writing the client may prohibit the inspection or release of the records.

(c) An agency must provide each client with a written notice of the Division of Health Service Regulation hotline number in advance of furnishing care to the client or during the initial evaluation visit before the initiation of services. (1971, c. 539, s. 1; 1973, c. 476, s. 128; 1981, c. 586, s. 2; 1983, c. 775, s. 1; 1991, c. 59, s. 1; c. 761, s. 34; 1999-113, s. 4; 2005-276, s. 10.40A(b); 2007-182, s. 1.)