



Removing Electronic Signatures

AWARDS Instruction Sheet

Overview

The Electronic Signatures feature allows staff and, in some cases, clients and “other” individuals, to electronically sign (“e-sign”) select records in AWARDS, including progress notes, group notes, service plans, discharge records, medication administration records, and “standalone” FormBuilder forms. An electronic signature in any of these locations constitutes a legally binding symbol that authenticates the document to which it is attached. It also serves as an acknowledgment that the individual whose electronic signature was placed on the record is the authorized signer.

At the time a record is electronically signed it is locked and can no longer be edited; however, we understand that in rare instances staff utilizing electronic signatures may not be careful in confirming that they are signing the right document for the right client before proceeding, and that it may occasionally be necessary to correct such errors. As a result, we have made available to agency staff functionality that can be used to remove electronic signatures from specific records at their discretion.

Required Permissions

E-signatures removal requires the following permission:

Remove E-Signatures

*** Tip:** *You cannot assign this permission to yourself; it must be assigned by another user with Permissions Maintenance access.*

Additional permissions are required to access the feature(s) from within which electronic signatures are to be removed. For more information on the those permissions, please refer to the portion of AWARDS Online Help related to each individual feature.

About This Document

This document is intended to inform you of considerations that should be made before using the tool to remove electronic signatures, and to guide you through the removal process should you choose to proceed. Specific topics covered are:

[What to Consider Before Removing Electronic Signatures](#)
[Removing Electronic Signatures](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

What to Consider Before Removing Electronic Signatures

Please keep in mind the following before deciding whether or not to remove electronic signatures from a record:

- Individual signatures cannot be removed from a document that has been signed by multiple people. Use of the remove electronic signatures functionality will result in *all* signatures being removed from the record.

- In almost all cases, removal of electronic signatures will unlock the record in question (and only that record), allowing it to be edited by users with the proper authority. Please keep in mind the following important exceptions:
 - **When working with progress notes** - A progress note may have been locked because they have been billed against, with the placement of an electronic signature, by using the optional automatic sign-off functionality set per program under System Setup > Business Rules, and/or manually locked because the user clicked the “Lock progress note to prevent future edits or deletion” option at the bottom of the *Progress Note Data Entry* page. If the note was automatically or manually signed off on prior to its being electronically signed, removing the signature will NOT unlock the note. In such cases a user with the “Unlock Progress Notes” permission must then manually unlock the note if edits are necessary.
 - **When working with service plans** - The plan from which signatures are removed is unlocked, as are any previous plans locked solely because that subsequent plan had been signed. Any previous plans locked as the result of their *own* electronic signatures are not affected.

✳ *Tip: Service plans that were signed and locked by signatures are shown with a lock and key icon next to them in the service plan index. Plans locked because a subsequent plan was signed have a bullet next to them in the index.*

 - **When working with PlanBuilder plans and reviews** - The plan or review from which a signature is removed will be unlocked. This will not affect prior plans.

✳ *Tip: Plans and reviews that were signed and locked by signatures are shown with a lock and key icon next to them in the plan index.*

★ **Important!** *Signatures should NEVER be removed from progress notes that have been used for billing.*

- As noted in the disclaimer text displayed at the time an electronic signature is removed, Foothold Technology takes NO responsibility for the removal of electronic signature, modification of information or any other actions taken by users or at their request, and you and the Subscriber to this service are solely responsible for such actions, including without limitation the compliance of such actions with applicable laws.

Removing Electronic Signatures

To remove an electronic signature from an e-signed record, complete the following steps:

1. From the AWARDS *Home* screen, click **Charts** from the left-hand menu and then navigate to the module and feature in which the e-signed record is located. The specific location of that record will be based on its type:
 - **When working with signed progress notes** - Navigate to **Services-Individual > Progress Notes**. Choose the appropriate client (first checking off the **Roster Archives** option if the client has been discharged), and then click **Continue**. Click the date of the note from which the signature will be removed.
 - **When working with signed group notes** - Navigate to **Services-Group > Group Notes**. Click the date of the note from which the signature will be removed.
 - **When working with signed service plans** - Navigate to **Services-Individual > Service Plans**. Click the radio button next to the plan containing the signature to be removed, and then click **Continue**.

- **When working with PlanBuilder plans** - Navigate to **Services-Individual > Plans and Reviews**. Choose the appropriate client (using the **Archives** toggle if the client has been discharged), and then click the plan or review from which the signature is to be removed.
- **When working with signed discharge records** - Navigate to **Discharge > Process Discharge**. Click the Discharges From radio button, if necessary adjust the date range so that it includes the discharge to be worked with, and then click **CONTINUE**. Select the appropriate client from the drop-down list, and then click **CONTINUE**.
- **When working with signed medication administration records** - Navigate to the **Medical > Medications** module for the client and from the *Medications Index*, select the medication associated with the administration record. The medication details page is displayed with a sub-index containing the administration records. Locate and open the administration records that contains the signature to be removed.

♦ **Warning!** Removing an e-signature from an administration record deletes the record entirely.

- **When working with signed FormBuilder forms** - Navigate to the signed form through the module where the form is kept, and then click **Printable Form**. Keep in mind that only forms in the following locations could have been electronically signed:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Listed as a Charting Event, available under Services-Individual | Profile - as a link at the top of client face sheets |
| Intake/Admission - as a link on client Intake forms | Employment - as a link on the Jobs fly-out |
| Services - as a link on the Services - Individual fly-out | Medical - as a link on the Medical fly-out |
| Discharge - as a link on the Discharge fly-out | Employee - as a button on the Human Resources menu |

- At the bottom of the record containing the electronic signatures to be removed, click **Remove E-Sign**. The *Electronic Signatures - Remove* confirmation dialog box is displayed.

 **Note:** If you do not see the **Remove E-Sign** button it is an indication that you do not have the required "Remove E-Signatures" permission. Please contact your supervisor or the local Help Desk for assistance. (This permission must be assigned by another staff member, it cannot be assigned to you by yourself.)



- Thoroughly review the disclaimer text on this dialog box. If you still wish to proceed with the electronic signature removal, click **Yes**.

 **Tip:** To cancel the removal, click **Close**.

When **Yes** is clicked, all electronic signatures are immediately removed from the record, and the removal is captured in the AWARDS audit trail.

At this time the record is also unlocked, allowing for editing by users with the proper authority.

★ **Important!** *In the case of service plans, not only is the plan from which signatures are removed unlocked, so too are any previous plans locked solely because that subsequent plan had been signed. Any previous plans locked as a result of their own electronic signatures are not affected.*

In the case of medication administrations, the records are deleted entirely when the signature is removed.

The process of removing electronic signatures is now complete.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following frequently asked questions regarding the removal of electronic signatures can be a useful reference when you have your own questions about the functionality.

Are there audit-related ramifications to removing electronic signatures?

If you are concerned about whether or not there will be audit-related issues to take into consideration when removing electronic signatures from records, you should reach out to your auditors or TA reps to discuss the issue and determine best practices.

Is the removal of electronic signatures captured in the audit trail?

Yes; however, the removal of signatures in batches should be avoided as only one audit trail record will be captured for signature removal within a 10-minute window by a given user for a single consumer, program, and module. For example, if I remove the signatures from a progress note for consumer John Smith in the Sample Program, and immediately remove the signatures from another progress note for that same consumer and in the same program, only the first removal is captured in the audit trail.

Why is an unsigned progress note still locked from editing?

Progress notes may have been locked because they have been billed against, with the placement of an electronic signature, by using the optional automatic sign-off functionality set per program under System Setup > Business Rules > [Service Records Editing Rules](#), and/or manually locked because the user clicked the “sign off note” option at the bottom of the Progress Note Composition page. If a note was automatically or manually signed off on prior to its being electronically signed, removing the signature will NOT unlock the note. In such cases a user with the “Unlock Progress Notes” permission must then manually unlock the note if edits are necessary. For more information on unlocking notes, see [AWARDS Online Help](#).