

HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER HANDBOOK OF OPERATING PROCEDURES

Chapter 11	Patient Privacy Policies	Effective:	April 2003
Section 11.1	General Oversight Policies	Revised:	February 2006
Policy 11.1.5	Patient Health Records	Responsibility:	Assistant Vice President for Regulatory Affairs & Compliance

PATIENT HEALTH RECORDS

Policy

The Health Science Center maintains patient health records in accordance with legal and professional standards to ensure the integrity and availability of health information to provide timely and appropriate care and health care planning for the patient.

Definitions

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION: Includes legal medical record components and designated record set components. Also, includes any directory type information or any document that contains patient-related information.

DESIGNATED RECORD SET: The designated record set is created to respond to patients' requests concerning the information used in making decisions about them. The designated record set is comprised of subsets of health information and may be maintained in various locations or files. Includes medical/dental and billing records maintained for or by the Health Science Center, and any health information used, in whole or part, by the Health Science Center to make decisions about the patient. Includes any photographs, videotapes, or other images that identify the patient. Includes records from other providers.

LEGAL HEALTH RECORD: The legal health (medical) record substantiates the care provided to the patient. Includes the actual paper or electronic health record maintained by the Health Science Center. Includes any photographs, videotapes, or other images that identify the patient. Does not include billing records. The term "health record" includes, by definition, all records generated for medical, dental, psychological patient care, exclusive of psychotherapy notes as defined in [Section 11.2.2](#) of the *Handbook of Operating Procedures* (HOP), "Use and Disclosure of Psychotherapy Notes".

PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION: Individually identifiable health information that is maintained in any medium.

RECORD: Any information that includes protected health information and is maintained, collected, used, or disseminated by the Health Science Center.

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Documentation Requirements

Only authorized individuals may document in the patient’s legal health record, including faculty and residents of any discipline.

All entries into the health record should be recorded in ink and are considered permanent. Authors should be clearly identifiable with credentials included with signature. Entries must be legible and timed and dated. The author should correct errors by drawing a single line through the incorrect entry, writing “error”, initialing, and dating it, with the reason for the change. Errors should never be obliterated. Documentation should be completed at the time services are rendered. Entries regarding patient care should never be made in advance of the actual provision of care. Amendments or corrections requested by the patient are made according to [Section 11.3.2](#) of the HOP, “Patient Right to Amend Patient Health Information”.

Health records must contain adequate information to provide care to the patient, to provide communication between care providers within and external to the Health Science Center, and to substantiate insurance claims. The health record is considered a legal document. The record should contain any laboratory, radiology, and other diagnostic reports that are used as part of the diagnostic and treatment process. Photographs, videotapes, or other images of the patient taken as part of the patient’s treatment may be filed with the record. If they are not filed with the record, the health care provider must document in the record that the images were taken and their location. See [Section 11.1.4](#) of the HOP, “Patient Photography, Videotaping, and Other Imaging”.

Copies of reports of care provided at other facilities sent to the Health Science Center from other facilities to assist with care are considered part of the designated record set. The patient should be asked to specifically authorize disclosures of any such records. Any such records that are not needed by Health Science Center practitioners to provide care and to substantiate care provided should be destroyed in the manner described in this policy. Re-disclosures of health information should be made in accordance with state and federal law.

Ownership and Patient Access

All parts of the health record belong to the Health Science Center; the Health Science Center must safeguard confidentiality and security of the record and the information contained in it. The information belongs to

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the patient, who is entitled to access according to [Section 11.3.6](#) of the HOP, "Access of Individual to Protected Health Information".

Original health records should not be removed from the Health Science Center except as directed by court order.

**Case Management
Files (Shadow
Records)**

Case management files or shadow records are comprised of medical or health information that is a duplicate of information contained in the legal health record. This is a temporary file and must be retained only for the duration necessary to assist the health care professional in tracking and providing care to the patient. This record must be destroyed within parameters established by the Health Science Center. A shadow record should not contain original documents not included in the legal record, except as provided in [Section 11.2.2](#) of the HOP, "Use and Disclosure of Psychotherapy Notes". In addition, there should be no disclosure of information from this record.

**Security and
Storage**

The Health Science Center must reasonably safeguard all protected health information from any intentional or unintentional use or disclosure. The Health Science Center must reasonably safeguard protected health information to limit incidental uses or disclosures made in the course of providing an otherwise permitted or required use or disclosure.

All paper health records, as defined above, must be maintained in secure areas. The files, cabinets, or storage areas must be locked after hours or when staff is not present. Areas in which patient information is stored must not be left unattended. Patient information should not be readily accessible to the general public, or to other individuals who do not have a need to view such information, such as laying out on desks or counters, on fax machines, copy machine, etc.

Electronic health information must be maintained according to Health Science Center security guidelines. Computer screens potentially displaying patient information must not be accessible to anyone not authorized to view such information. Staff must follow Health Science Center policies regarding use of computer passwords and logging off.

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Verbal exchange of patient information between care providers and those involved with the patient’s care, payment, or other health care operations, must occur to ensure appropriate and timely care to the patient. Individuals who exchange verbal information must ensure that they are in areas where they cannot be overheard by others who are not involved in the patient’s care and do not have a right to hear the information. Staff must be particularly diligent in ensuring confidentiality when exchanging patient information in treatment areas, over the telephone, and in areas accessible to common areas such as hallways, elevators, and cafeterias.

Retention

Records are retained according to the Health Science Center’s records retention policy.

Destruction

All health information must be destroyed in a confidential and secure manner. Approved methods of destruction may include shredding or use of an approved outside vendor that specializes in destruction of confidential information. Confidential information must not be discarded in regular trash bins, recycle bins, or other publicly-accessible locations.

Electronic data must be disposed according to Health Science Center security policies.

The department or clinic, or outside vendor if used, responsible for the destruction of confidential information must document, in accordance with [Section 2.2.1](#) of the HOP, “Records and Information Management and Retention”. The documentation should include the date of destruction, method of destruction, what records were destroyed, a statement that records were destroyed in the normal course of business, and a signature and date of the person supervising the destruction.
