

Patient confidentiality is not a new idea. Federal and state governments have various laws regarding medical privacy including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) which, in turn, led to the federal Privacy Rule and Security Rule. These rules are concerned with the privacy of medical information in all forms (oral, written and electronic). We are required by these rules to assure that you receive appropriate information regarding our patient confidentiality policies and procedures. TPP Privacy and Security Policy are available on the organization's website.

### **Safeguarding Patient Information**

**What is considered Patient Information?** Patient Information includes all information that would allow anyone in the community to identify a particular person as a patient: name, address, any dates, including date of birth, age over 85, telephone/fax number, computer addresses including email addresses, Web URL or IP address, identification numbers (car tag, drivers' license, social security, insurance, etc.), or a photograph. **Under state and federal law, you are prohibited from disclosing this information to anyone outside of the vaccination clinic.** Please note that the fact that a person is receiving health care services (including vaccinations) is confidential even if no other information regarding the person's condition or treatment is revealed.

**Your use of patient information:** Volunteers may have access to written or computerized patient information depending on the duties performed by the Volunteer. You may use this information only to perform the services at the vaccination clinic. Whether directing traffic, registering a patient, or administering vaccines, **all Patient Information is confidential.**

#### **Written Information on Patients:**

- Lists of patients, patient labels, patient reports or your notes from patient conversations should not be taken out of the vaccination clinic or left where the public can see the contents.
- If you have any paper with Patient Information that is to be discarded. Please put the paper in a locked shred box or give it to the site supervisor to place it in a locked shred bin.

**Computer systems:** If your duties require you to use a computer, you must be given a user ID and password. The ID and password will be your electronic signature in the system.

- Never give your password to anyone – not even a member of the IS Department
- Never allow someone else to work under your ID and password.
- Always lock or log off the computer you are using before you walk away
- Never print from the computer without first knowing the location of the printer.
- Be aware of persons who may attempt to read confidential information over your shoulder.

#### **Talking about patients:**

We are expected to take reasonable caution to reduce the chance of Patient Information being overheard or provided to uninvolved persons. The elevators, hallways, and other public locations are not appropriate areas for talking about a patient.

**Discussion of the patient with the patient's family, friends and other visitors:** The patient (or the parents of patients under age 18) control what information is shared with family, friends and other visitors. When the patient cannot make this decision due to incapacity, the treatment team will use their professional judgment to share what is in the patient's best interests with the patient's family or friends.

**Discussion of the patient's care with members of the patient's care team:** Doctors, nurses, and other treatment team members should have access to any and all information necessary to provide appropriate care for a patient.

## **Patient Confidentiality and Volunteers**

### **Discussion of patients with staff members and other volunteers who are not involved in the patients' care:**

Persons not providing care to the patient should only have access to the patient's information as necessary to perform their jobs. Please keep the "need to know" principle in mind before discussing a patient with anyone other than the patient's care team.

### **Rights of Patients**

All persons have certain rights with respect to their health information. Those rights listed below are described in detail in the Notice of Privacy Practices found on the organization's website.

- **Right to inspect and copy records**
- **Right to restrict uses and disclosures**
- **Right to receive information in a confidential manner**
- **Right to an accounting of certain disclosures**

### **Incidental Disclosures**

**What is an incidental use or disclosure?** It is nearly impossible to walk through a healthcare facility without overhearing or seeing snippets of information about patients. It is not possible in a hospital environment to avoid all unintentional disclosures. We are expected, however, to keep incidental disclosures to a minimum by taking reason safeguards to limit disclosure.

### **Privacy Pointers**

- ✓ Medical records and other sources of protected health information (PHI) should only be viewed, accessed, or disclosed for patient care, payment, or healthcare operation purposes
- ✓ Do not share PHI with others who shouldn't have access, including co-workers or personal acquaintances. During this time of increased stress on the healthcare system, it's important for us to avoid discussing patient cases unless authorized
- ✓ Avoid accessing a patient's medical record unless it is needed for your work as a volunteer. During a time when the spread of rumors and gossip about infection rates can increase anxiety and panic, it's even more important for us to focus only on the information we need to provide immediate care and treatment.
- ✓ Minimize the potential for unauthorized personnel to overhear patient information during conversations. Patients must be treated with respect and that discussions about care and treatment should be managed appropriately.
- ✓ The "minimum necessary" standard applies to ensure appropriate and limited distribution of PHI. Healthcare professionals must make reasonable efforts to ensure that any PHI disclosed is restricted to the minimum necessary information to achieve the purpose for which the information is being disclosed.
- ✓ Do not access a family member's, friend's, co-worker's or other's medical information out of concern, curiosity, or "check on" someone. All patients deserve respect and privacy.
- ✓ All access to the medical record is can be tracked and is audited routinely. Unauthorized access or disclosure has serious consequences, including disciplinary action

### **QUESTIONS?**

Contact (833-MBL-HLTH)

**Privacy Quiz**

Please complete the following quiz to test your understanding of the material you have just read. Then sign the Statement of Responsibility and give it to your supervisor.

**True or False (circle the correct answer)**

- T  F  Healthcare Volunteers are subject to the same laws as employees with respect to patient confidentiality.
- T  F  All patient information learned as a volunteer is considered confidential.
- T  F  You may share your computer ID and password with other staff as needed.
- T  F  A patient census list should be protected from the public view.
- T  F  It is ok to tell your friends and family who came into the vaccine clinic for treatment.

**Statement of Responsibility**

By signing below, I acknowledge that:

- A copy of Patient Confidentiality and Volunteers has been provided to me and I have read it.
- I understand that I am responsible for following the policies and procedures of The Palmetto Palace regarding patient confidentiality.

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Signature of Volunteer

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Date

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Printed name

**QUESTIONS?**

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