



## Confidentiality Policy

All protected health information (PHI) is held in strictest confidence. Patients/residents/members place their confidence in their physician and the staff. It is the employee's professional responsibility not to violate this confidence through indiscriminate discussion pertaining to co-workers, patients, residents or members and their treatment or progress, without authorization. Any unauthorized disclosure of Protected Health Information is a violation of the law and may easily cause embarrassment to OSF HealthCare, its staff, the patients, residents, members or other guests and seriously affect our relations with the community. This responsibility does not end when an employee terminates employment with OSF.

All persons accessing the information systems of OSF HealthCare and its Affiliates are prevented by law from willfully and wantonly disclosing confidential information. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: patient/resident/member demographic/clinical information, employee identification and financial information. Such disclosure violates the Health Insurance Portability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). A former employee who violates or continues to violate confidentiality may be subject to a "do not re-hire" designation in their personnel file.

The service rendered a patient/resident/member must always conform to the orders of the physician in charge. The records of patients/residents/members are strictly CONFIDENTIAL. Patients/residents/members may not yet know the nature of their illness or the final diagnosis.

Examples of inappropriate actions are as follows:

- Discussion of patient information in public areas.
- Repeating patient/resident/member or employee information to friends or relatives when information is learned in the course of employment.
- Accessing patient/resident/member or employee information without a need to know. This includes your own information unless you have gone through appropriate, authorized processes.
- Asking co-workers about patient/resident/member or employee information without a need to know.

Requests from news media and other organizations for information should be referred per the facility policy, or the facility privacy official.

There are many other types of information that must be handled confidentially. Examples may include financial information, strategic plans, personnel information, etc. Discussion of any confidential information with unauthorized personnel may be addressed through the Positive Discipline Policy (Refer to Policy #601) and, depending on the violation, may be considered reason for immediate discharge.

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