

MEDICAL CENTER INFORMATION

SYSTEMS ACCESS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Adherence to the highest standards of professionalism and to the Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) information privacy and security policies is expected in the use of the electronic medical record. Maintaining and protecting the accuracy, integrity, and confidentiality of patient information entrusted to VUMC clinicians is of paramount importance to safeguard patient safety, to provide high quality care supported by evidence-based decision support, and to minimize institutional risk associated with billing and regulatory compliance. Failure to preserve the integrity of the unique user identification associated with each individual granted access for use of the clinical information systems undermines the integrity of the clinical documentation and communication, as well as the privacy and confidentiality of the patient information.

It is recognized that technology solutions must be evaluated and implemented to facilitate the user sign-on process in busy clinical settings. However, commitment to the integrity of the unique user identification must not be compromised in the interim.

Employee user IDs and passwords are equivalent to signatures. Employees should NEVER share passwords with others and never use or work under another person's ID/password. Users should always log off or lock their computer screens by pressing CTRL+ALT and DELETE and selecting "Lock Computer" anytime that they walk away from a computer. This practice helps ensure others do not use the computer under the wrong user ID and see confidential information they may not be authorized to access. Employees are accountable for any action taken under their user IDs and passwords.

Clinicians may only access information related to the treatment of patients with whom they have a clinical relationship, for which they have been asked to provide a consultation, or whose records the clinician has written permission from the patient to access. Personnel are not authorized to access the medical record of co-workers, friends, or family members without written authorization (Communication with Family and Others form) from the patient unless they are directly involved in the care of that patient. You are **no longer** allowed to access your minor child's Electronic Medical Record (EMR). You may access your own EMR is view-only; changes, updates or any other actions inside your EMR are not allowed.

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Electronic audit trails of accesses to patient information are conducted and maintained. These audit trails record the machine name, user, date, time and patient identification.

One of the VUMC Credo Behaviors is: “**I respect privacy and confidentiality**”. Information that is obtained about a patient is strictly confidential and is legally protected from disclosure. It may be given to another employee or health care provider only when it is necessary to do so for the following reasons: (1) for the continuity of care, (2) in certain situations when required by law, or (3) when otherwise authorized by the patient. It must never be discussed with any other unauthorized person. Divulging such confidential information or any other departmental information deemed and explained by the department chair as confidential may result in disciplinary action. **HIPAA is a Federal Law and violations are FELONIES and can be tried in Federal Court, resulting in fines or potential imprisonment.**

Whenever a user prints a document containing patient information, it should always be placed in a shredder bin when finished. Users should never throw patient information away in a regular trash can. Users should maintain appropriate confidentiality of papers listing patient identifiable information that they possess, as the papers can easily be left in a conference room or other area utilized by non-authorized individuals, thereby putting privacy and confidentiality of the information at risk.

Any violation of confidentiality and/or the terms in the **Confidentiality Agreement** may result in disciplinary action, including termination of access to the systems, and disciplinary action in accordance with [House Staff Information Section I.V. GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION EVALUATION AND DISCIPLINARY GUIDELINES](#) of the House Staff Manual and applicable VUMC policies.

House Staff can direct questions or concerns about privacy to the Privacy Office at (615) 936-3594 or email: Privacy.Office@vumc.org.