
Department: UW Medicine Compliance

Subject: PP-28 Faxing Protected Health Information

Policy Number: 28

Effective Date: September 28, 2007

Review Date: September 28, 2007

Policy:

To protect patient privacy and to decrease the risk of a breach of confidentiality, patient information should only be faxed to fulfill a treatment, payment, or health care operations obligation (Please see UW Medicine Privacy Policy *PP-07 Use and Disclosure of Protected Health Information to Carry Out Treatment, Payment, and Health Care Operations*), or a specifically authorized request (Please see UW Medicine Privacy Policy *PP-08 Use & Disclosure of Protected Health Information Requiring Authorization*). Workforce members must fax in the manner described below to reduce the possibility of erroneous transmission and should include a fax cover sheet to minimize risk. The fax cover sheet must include the following elements:

- Date of fax transmission
- Name of requestor and facility/organization
- Sender's facsimile number
- Sender's phone number
- Number of pages sent (including cover letter)
- Confidentiality Notice which includes a statement regarding re-disclosure
- Statement regarding communications for misdirected faxes and destruction

To protect patient privacy, fax machines should not be placed in public access areas (Please see UW Medicine Information Security Policy *SEC-04 – Physical and Environmental Information Security Policy*).

I. Sending Faxes

Departments are responsible to establish standards for fax telephone number database maintenance which includes establishing methods for correcting numbers as errors or updates are identified, and for confirming accuracy of fax numbers on a recurring basis.

Workforce members should pre-program frequently used fax numbers to ensure accurate transmission. After selecting the recipient's fax number from a pre-programmed list or keying the recipient's fax number, check that the fax number is correct before sending the fax.

Fax logging functionality should be turned on. This log should be reviewed to identify and resolve any unsuccessful faxing attempts.

II. Receiving Faxes

Workforce members must promptly remove faxed documents from fax machines. If a fax is received in error, inform the sender if possible and dispose of the fax in a secure manner. (Please see UW Medicine Information Security Policy *SEC-05.02 – Media Handling Standard for Restricted and Confidential Information*)

III. Misdirected Faxes

If a workforce member sends a fax to an incorrect number, the workforce member must immediately take steps to retrieve and/or destroy the information.

- The workforce members must promptly call the recipient of the misdirected fax to have the receiver either destroy the information (Please see UW Medicine Information Security Policy *SEC-05.02 – Media Handling Standard for Restricted and Confidential Information*) or mail the information back to the workforce member.
- The workforce member must notify their Entity Privacy Officer to assist in the documentation of the disclosure and to follow the Accidental or Non-Authorized Disclosures process outlined in UW Medicine Privacy Policy *PP-25 Accounting of Disclosures of Protected Health Information*

Cross References:

UWMC: 100-2 Facsimile Sending and Receiving of Medical Records

References:

- #### I. 70.02.150 - Security safeguards
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UW Privacy Officer: _____ Date: _____
Kathryn Waddell, Executive Director, Health Sciences Administration
