



Provincial Health Services Authority

## Security of Health Records policy

**Summary of Changes: change in name to BC Cancer and change to new format**

NEW		Previous
BC Cancer		HIM 060-IV-B-90. Jan. 30/09; Feb 26/13; Apr. 18/13

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# Security of Health Records Policy

## Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

BC Cancer (BCC) is responsible for protecting the confidentiality, security and integrity of the health records in its custody and control in keeping with the *BC Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA)*.

### 1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all health records containing personal information stored in paper, electronic media or other format(s).

### 1.3 Ownership

All health records that are maintained for BCC patients are the physical property of BCC; however, the patient owns the information in the record and has the right to access the information.

### 1.4 Accountability

The PHSA Chief Information Officer and the President of BCC have the delegated responsibility from the PHSA Board of establishing the required safeguards to ensure the protection of both the physical record and the information contained within the health record.

## 2. Policy

**2.1** BCC shall develop, implement and maintain appropriate health record standards and procedures in compliance with legislation and best practice guidelines. This includes safeguarding the information from unauthorized use, access, loss, tampering or destruction. This policy applies to health records in all forms (paper and electronic) in its custody and control both on-site and off-site

### 2.2 Access and Use

**2.2.1** Information in the health record must only be accessed by authorized individuals on a “need to know” basis as required for them to perform their duties.

**2.2.2** Patient records must be organized, accessible and available to authorized personnel for continuity of care. A record location system will be maintained and updated to ensure the tracking of health records at all times.

**2.2.3** Information in the health records will be communicated in a secure, confidential environment.

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2.2.4 BCCA will ensure appropriate access to health records and audit this through an Access Log.

### 2.4 Storage and Removal of Health Records

- 2.4.1 All health records within the custody and control of BCCA shall be held and stored in an organized, safe and secure manner.
- 2.4.2 Health records will be secured and will not be left unattended in areas that are accessible to unauthorized personnel or the general public.
- 2.4.3 While in active use, health records will only be in the control and custody of authorized individuals. The records are to be returned to designated secure areas following use.
- 2.4.3 Original documents contained in the paper health record may not be removed from BCC facilities, except when it is required for continuity of care, operational requirements of BCCA or as required by law.
- 2.4.4 Paper health records may accompany a patient being referred temporarily to an institution not operated by BCCA or one of its affiliates for diagnostic or treatment purposes.
- 2.4.5 Paper health records shall be transported across both BCCA and non-BCCA sites in a secure manner and in accordance with the policy for transporting of confidential records.
- 2.4.6 BCCA will conduct audits, and assess procedures, standards, systems and equipment employed in the use and storage of health records to ensure they comply with information security guidelines, standards and legislation.

### 2.5 Network Security

Security of the network is the responsibility of the Information Management Information Systems portfolio. Personnel accessing confidential information contained in the health record via the network must be authorized to access it and this access will be monitored. Usage of BCCA's clinical information systems will be monitored to support operational, maintenance, auditing, security and investigative activities.

## 3. Responsibilities and Compliance

This policy applies to all employees, physicians, students, residents, researchers, volunteers, and third parties having a contractual relationship with BCC.

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## 4. Definitions

**Confidentiality** – is the obligation of an individual or organization to make sure that confidential information is kept secure and is accessible only to those people who are authorized to have access.

**Control** – (of a record) means the power or authority to manage the record throughout its life cycle, including restricting, regulating and administering its use or disclosure. Where the information in a record directly relates to more than one public body, more than one public body may have control of the record. The public body with the greater interest processes the request for information.

The following are some of the factors indicating that a public body has control of a record:

- the record was created by a staff member, an officer, or a member of the public body in the course of his or her duties;
- the record was created by an outside consultant for the public body;
- the record is specified in a contract as being under the control of a public body;
- the content of the record relates to the public body's mandate and functions;
- the public body has the authority to regulate the record's use and disposition.
- the public body has relied upon the record to a substantial extent;
- the record is closely integrated with other records held by the public body; or,
- the contract permits the public body to inspect, review, possess or copy records produced, received or acquired by the contractor as a result of the contract.<sup>i</sup>

**Custody** – (of a record) means having physical possession of a record, even though the public body does not necessarily have responsibility for the record. Physical possession normally includes responsibility for access, managing, maintaining, preserving, disposing and providing security.

Where more than one copy of a record exists, more than one public body may have custody of a record.<sup>ii</sup>

**Electronic Health Record (EHR)** – is a computer-based electronic file that resides in a system specifically designed to support users by providing accessibility to complete and accurate health data, alerts, reminders, clinical decision support systems, links to medical knowledge, and other aids.<sup>iii</sup>

**Hybrid Health Record** – A hybrid health record is a system with functional components that:

- use both paper and electronic documents;
- use both manual and electronic processes.<sup>iv</sup>

**Health Record** – A health record is a compilation of pertinent facts of an individual's health history, including all past and present medical conditions, illnesses and treatments, with emphasis on the specific events affecting the patient during the current episode of care. The information documented in the health record is created by all healthcare professionals providing the care.<sup>v</sup>

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**Information Security** – the preservation of the confidentiality, integrity and availability of personal information through the implementation of policies and procedures based on relevant legislation, standards and ethical principles.

**Integrity** – the accuracy, authenticity, availability, completeness of information and processing methods, and the safeguarding against duplicate records and changes to the information.vi

**Record** – includes books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, letters, vouchers, papers and any other thing on which information is recorded or stored by graphic, electronic, mechanical or other means, but does not include a computer program or any other mechanism that produces records.

**Security** – is the administrative, physical and technological safeguards a health care agency has in place to prevent accidental or intentional disclosure by inappropriate access or by unauthorized individuals. It also includes the mechanisms in place to protect the information from alteration, destruction or loss.

## 5. References

- IMIT/PHSA Acceptable Use Policy (Draft)
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Policy Definitions. Site accessed 07/09/06;  
URL: <http://www.mser.gov.bc.ca/privacy access/manual/other/def.html>
- Canadian Health Information Management Association (CHIMA). Site accessed 07/09/06;  
URL: <http://www.chima-cchra.ca/pages/01about/04record.html>
- American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA). Practice Brief: Complete Medical Record in a Hybrid EHR environment: Part 1 – Managing the Transition.
- Canadian Health Information Management Association (CHIMA). *What is a Health Record?* Site accessed July 11, 2006. URL: <http://www.chra.ca/pages/01about/o4record.html>
- Calgary Health Authority – Policy 1438 Information Security and Privacy, October 20, 2005

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