

HARBOR-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER

SUBJECT: PROTECTING HEALTH INFORMATION
AFTER CLOSURE

POLICY NO. 730

PURPOSE:

To provide guidelines to protect the integrity of patient information in accordance with applicable federal and state laws in the event that Harbor-UCLA Medical Center ceases to operate.

POLICY:

If Harbor-UCLA Medical Center ceases operation, the medical records will be transferred to another County facility or stored with a commercial storage vendor contracted by the County of Los Angeles, Department of Health Services. Before records are transferred or stored, patients will be notified, if possible, and given an opportunity to obtain copies of their health information.

Within 49 hours of ceasing to operate, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center will notify the State Department of Health Services of its plan for the safe preservation of medical records.

Regardless of the archival/storage method used, the integrity and confidentiality of patient information will be maintained and records will be accessible to the patient and other authorized users.

PROCEDURE:

- I. Upon notification of the decision to close Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center Administration will begin planning for proper disposition of medical records. The primary objective will be to protect the confidentiality of the information contained in the records. The second objective is to assure future access by patients, future healthcare needs and other authorized uses.
- II. To assure accurate information for continuing care, all health information must be completed before the records are archived/stored. This includes transcription of all dictated reports and interpretation of any diagnostic tests.
- III. If Harbor-UCLA Medical Center ceases operation, the medical records will be transferred to

EFFECTIVE DATE: 09/03

SUPERSEDES:

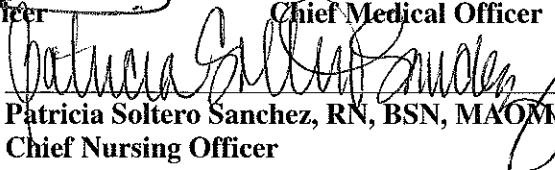
REVISED: 08/06

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another DHS facility. If transfer to another DHS facility is not feasible, the records will be stored with a commercial storage vendor contracted by DHS.

- IV. Before records are transferred to another county facility, patients shall be notified, if possible, and given an opportunity to obtain copies of their records. Letters may be sent to former patients, or announcements may be repeated in local newspapers and professional journals, etc., to notify patients and their physicians about the upcoming closure/dissolution and let them know how to access their information. Patients are to be given at least one month, if possible, to request copies of their records.

When preparing the letter to patients, please include:

- The date the facility will close;
- Notification of where the records will be stored and how to access them;
- A Release of Information form to be completed to receive a copy of their medical records;
- Notification that only written requests for copies of health information will be honored;
- Notification of any time limitations (submission deadlines) on the period of time during which requests will be accepted.

Harbor-UCLA Medical Center shall retain a copy of the actual letter sent to patients, along with the mailing list, post office receipt, and all returned (undeliverable) envelopes.

In the event of the closure of Harbor-UCLA Medical Center within 48 hours of ceasing to operate, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center will notify the State Department of Health Services of its plan for the safe preservation of medical records.

REFERENCES:

- AHIMA Practice Brief: Protecting Patient Information After a Facility Closure, (November 2003)
- Title 22, California Code of Regulations, Section 70751(d).