

HARBOR-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER

**SUBJECT: PATIENT BLACKOUT/VIP GUIDELINES
NO. 466**

POLICY

PURPOSE:

To establish a standard procedure for protecting the identity of patients whose safety may be threatened if their presence is known or who directly instruct the hospital to not confirm their presence in the facility.

POLICY:

Harbor-UCLA Medical Center shall conceal the identity and location of any patient whose safety or recuperation could be threatened if his/her whereabouts are known or of any patient who expressly states that s/he does not want the hospital to confirm his/her presence in the facility. Such patients are considered “black-out” or “VIP” patients, and are listed in the Hospital’s electronic health record as “VIP” so as to conceal their identity and location.

DEFINITIONS:

Protected Health Information (PHI): Individually identifiable information relating to past, present, or future physical or mental health or condition of an individual, provision of health care to an individual, or past, present, or future payment.

Disclose or Disclosure: With respect to PHI, the release of, transfer of, provision of access to, or divulging in any manner PHI outside of the Medical Center’s internal operations or workforce members.

VIP: Any patient who is a Harbor-UCLA Medical Center workforce member, law enforcement or fire department workforce member, celebrity, victim of a criminal attack, or any other person of notoriety and/or in the public eye documented a “VIP” in the hospital’s electronic health for purposes of protecting their privacy. “VIP” has three categories:

1. Law enforcement black-out, which may be requested by law enforcement who are admitted under law enforcement custody.
2. Medical black-out, which applies to law enforcement, fire personnel, workforce members, or high profile patients (due to celebrity status or nature of admission).
3. Patient requested black-out status, which can be requested by the patient or his/her family or

EFFECTIVE DATE: 12/98

SUPERSEDES:

REVISED: 02/02, 03/05, 06/15, 09/16

REVIEWED: 02/02, 01/08, 06/15, 09/16

REVIEWED COMMITTEE:

APPROVED BY: _____

**Kim McKenzie, RN, MSN, CPHQ
Interim Chief Executive Officer**

**Timothy L. Van Natta, MD, FACS
Chief Medical Officer**

**Patricia Soltero Sanchez, RN, BSN, MAOM
Acting Chief Nursing Officer**

Signature(s) on File.

HARBOR-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER

**SUBJECT: PATIENT BLACKOUT GUIDELINES
(NON-PUBLISHED PATIENT)**

POLICY NO. 466

provider.

Alias: A pseudonym given to a patient to prevent the patient legal name from being used/disclosed.

PROCEDURE:

At the time of admission to the facility the staff will identify and document in the electronic health record whether the patient meets the criteria to be placed on black-out/VIP status.

Types of “Black-Out” or “VIP”, or “Non-Published” Patient Status

There are multiple reasons for which a patient may require black-out with regard to the release of information about their admission to the hospital, their medical status, or for whom visitation may be restricted.

1. Patients “In Custody” of Law Enforcement

In the event a patient is in the custody of law enforcement upon arrival or admission to the hospital, law enforcement may request a black-out of the individual’s admission to and/or medical condition.

Patients who are admitted under law enforcement custody are considered incarcerated during their stay and will be managed in the same manner as if they were being treated in jail medical ward. Law enforcement personnel will make all determinations regarding visitor access to the patient and will work with clinical staff regarding notification of the patient’s family and obtaining appropriate medical consents for care and treatment.

If there are questions regarding release of information to family/friends about the presence or medical condition of a patient admitted under the custody of law enforcement, staff should contact the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (Sheriff) at x3311 for assistance in working with outside law enforcement.

The provider will place an order of “In Custody” so that the information will show on the banner bar in the electronic health record. Registration staff will identify the patient as “in custody” by accessing the VIP field. Under display and directory chose “No – In Custody” which will show on the various tracking and patient locator boards

In the event of a law enforcement black-out, Sheriff personnel will document and maintain a log of all patients admitted under law enforcement custody and their black-out status. Sheriff will notify Registration to change the patient’s in-custody black-out status in the electronic health record once the patient’s black-out status has been lifted.

2. Medical Black-Out (Law enforcement officer/fire personnel/hospital workforce member/high-profile patient)

In those instances when a patient is a law enforcement officer, fire personnel, workforce member, or

HARBOR-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER

**SUBJECT: PATIENT BLACKOUT GUIDELINES
(NON-PUBLISHED PATIENT)**

POLICY NO. 466

public figure, such as a public official or celebrity, whose care or safety could be jeopardized by publishing the name in the medical record, the hospital may elect to place this individual on medical black-out. In these cases, no information about the patient's admission or condition may be released, unless specifically authorized by the patient. There may be cases where a patient is identified as being high profile, but does not need to be given black-out/unlisted status.

The decision to place a patient on "medical" black-out is at the discretion of the clinical care team and will be made in those instances when the patient's medical condition is such that visitors to the bedside would impair the patient's care and treatment. A medical black-out does not affect the medical information that is provided to the patient's family/caregivers, just the physical access to the patient.

3. Patient-Requested Non-Published Status (Physician/Caregiver/patient decision to make private such as victim of a crime or high profile)

Patients have the right under HIPAA to request restrictions in how their medical information is disclosed. Patient who request that Harbor-UCLA Medical Center not disclose the patient's presence in the hospital will be placed on black-out and no information about the patient will be disclosed unless specifically authorized by the patient.

In the case of minors admitted to the hospital, the parent/guardian may limit those individuals permitted to visit the patient and restrict the information that may be released. The unit Nursing staff will notify the security guard at the entrance to the unit as to visitor access to the patient and the security guard will restrict access to the patient accordingly.

Documenting "Black-Out" or "VIP" Status

The patient's black-out or non-published status must be documented in the electronic medical record to ensure information about the patient is not improperly disclosed.

1. A black-out or VIP status request may be submitted by law enforcement, hospital personnel, or the patient or his/her family/caregiver.
 2. If possible, the patient should be consulted before a flag is placed on their electronic medical record.
 3. If the patient cannot be consulted due to his/her medical condition, it is the responsibility of the Sheriff, in collaboration with the medical team to determine if the patient requires black-out or VIP status, due to the nature of the situation (e.g. law enforcement or high profile case).
 4. During the patient registration/financial screening process, the Registration staff will flag the patient as "VIP", in the electronic medical record. This function must be completed by the Finance staff to ensure the message crosses over to all parts of the electronic medical record.
 5. Using the display in directory field, Registration staff will choose the visitor status based on law enforcement and staff instruction. Once the patient has been identified "VIP", the electronic health record directs Registration staff to select how the patient is to be displayed in the hospital's directory. The available fields are:
"No - Confidential"
"No - In Custody"
-

HARBOR-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER

**SUBJECT: PATIENT BLACKOUT GUIDELINES
(NON-PUBLISHED PATIENT)**

POLICY NO. 466

“Yes”

“Yes – With Restrictions”

6. Once the patient has been recorded in the electronic health record as “VIP, No – In Custody”, Registration or the Hospital personnel entering the patient’s status, are to notify the Sheriff” at x3311. Sheriff will include the patient on the log that is maintained for in-custody patients.
7. The electronic health record will reflect the patient’s “VIP” and “Display in Directory” status, which will be used by the Information Desk staff and Hospital Operator in response to inquiries from visitors.
8. When there is an inquiry about a “VIP” patient, who is not in the custody of law enforcement, but has a “VIP” flag or “Display in Directory” status of “Yes – with Restrictions”:
 - a. Information Desk or Hospital Operator staff will call the unit the patient to which the patient is admitted and verify whether the patient would like to have the visitor or if any other information can be disclosed.
 - b. Information Desk or Hospital Operator staff may not disclose any information, including whether or not the person is a patient, unless they are given authorization by the patient without the correct pseudonym being provided.
 - c. This process is designed to prevent the disclosure of a patient’s location to those who are not authorized to know, based on either the patient’s request or the decision of the LASD, outside law enforcement, and/or the medical care team.
9. When there is an inquiry about a patient who has “Display in the Directory” status of “No – Confidential”, the Information Desk or Hospital Operator staff may not disclose any information about the patient, including whether the individual is admitted as a patient to the hospital.
10. If there are questions regarding release of information to family/friends about the presence or medical condition of a patient admitted under the custody of law enforcement, staff should contact the LA County Sheriff’s Department at x3311 for assistance in working with outside law enforcement.