

Facsimile Transmission Policy and Guidelines

Policy Details

Creation Date: _____

Revision Date: _____

Applies to: All Employees and Contractors

Approved by: _____

Purpose

This document provides guidelines for the clinic to follow in order to maintain the privacy and security of health information when received and transmitted by fax. While it is common for practices to send health information via fax, there is a risk of inadvertent unauthorized disclosure of information when sending documents via fax.

Unless the health information is required immediately and there is no other practical means of obtaining secure access to the information, custodians must find a more secure way to send the information.

The Health Information Act (HIA) section 60 requires custodians “to protect against reasonably anticipated threat or hazard to the security or integrity of health information or of loss of the health information.”

Custodians must make a reasonable effort to ensure disclosures are made to the intended and authorized person and are accountability for unauthorized disclosures under the HIA.

Acceptable Use of Fax - Policy and Guidelines

There are situations where the risks to patient care and safety clearly outweighs any potential privacy risk the custodian may face.

Sending Information by Fax - Policy

- Health information should only be transmitted by fax when necessary and there are no other reasonable options for sending the information in a secure and timely manner.
- Faxes of health information must be limited to the least amount of information necessary.
- Always complete a practice fax cover sheet, clearly identifying both sender and intended receiver of the information. The cover sheet should include a confidentiality notice warning that the information is intended for the named recipient only, as well as request the receiver to contact you immediately if the transmission was misdirected. Please refer to the breach management policy if this occurs.

Sending Information by Fax – Guidelines

The _____ follows these additional steps when sending faxes:

- Before sending a manual fax, check that the receiver's number is correct, then verify in the machine's display window that you have keyed it in correctly.
- It is recommended that where possible, the clinic confirms that a recipient has taken appropriate precautions to prevent anyone else from seeing the faxed documents (e.g., their fax is kept in a secure location, or they have someone watching the machine while in operation).
- Designating a role in the clinic as responsible for sending documents by fax will limit the chance that staff unfamiliar with the process will inadvertently fax information in an inappropriate manner. Consider a role within the clinic where the job duties align with the clinic's fax process.
- The clinic uses preprogrammed fax numbers to reduce the chance that an incorrect number will be dialed when sending a fax. However, preprogrammed fax numbers that have been incorrectly entered or are no longer the fax number for the intended recipient, may lead to multiple misdirected faxes. Please indicate your policy for preprogrammed numbers and your process for ensuring that the numbers are correct.
- When possible, clinic staff will call ahead to ensure that the recipient is there to receive the fax or call afterwards to ensure they received the complete transmission. If neither is possible, clinic staff will check the confirmation sheet to see that it went to the correct number.
- When sending information by fax modem (a fax device contained in a computer), clinic staff must confirm that other users of the computer system cannot get access to the fax without a password.
- If possible, use encryption technology or other technology to secure fax transmissions.

Receiving Information by Fax - Policy

When faxing is necessary, custodians should follow these guidelines to reduce the risk of accidental disclosure when **receiving** information by fax, including:

- Limit your requests for health information transmitted by fax when necessary and there are no other reasonable options for receiving the information in a secure and timely manner.
- Security precautions should be taken for faxes received after normal office hours.
- If possible, use encryption technology or other technology to secure fax transmissions.

Receiving Information by Fax - Guidelines

The _____ follows these additional steps when receiving faxes:

- Try to arrange a time to receive faxes containing personal information so you can be at the fax machine as they arrive.
- If your fax machine is equipped, use the feature requiring the receiver to enter a password before the machine will print the fax. This ensures that only the intended receiver can retrieve the document. Similarly, ask the sender to make sure you must supply a password to retrieve the document.
- If you are expecting information by fax modem (a fax device contained in a computer), ensure that other users of your system cannot access the information without a password.
- Be aware that your fax number can be reassigned once you have given up the number. It is possible to 'purchase' the rights to that line so that the number is never reassigned.