Subject: SAFEGUARDING AND STORING MEDICAL RECORDS (PHYSICAL LOCATIONS)

Originator: Health Information Management

Approval Date: March 1, 2011

Approved By: ___________________________________________________
               Catherine Disch, EVP/Chief Operating Officer

Policy:
It is the policy of Truman Medical Centers to safeguard medical records against loss, destruction tampering and unauthorized access or use by having a consistent method of filing and storage of all records. This policy only applies to the paper medical records. Electronic storage of records are addressed in separate policies.

Purpose:
The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the safeguarding paper medical records in Truman Medical Centers departments while at the same time ensuring that medical records are easily accessible for patient care.

Scope: Corporate-wide for all departments that maintain and store medical records.

Responsibilities:

Health Information Management (HIM)/Clinics that maintain Medical Records:
   1. Maintain patient records in accordance with accepted professional standards and practices.
   2. Track records signed out and returned to the dept.
   3. Ensure that only those with authorized access have access to the department.

Clinical/Other areas:
   1. Accept responsibility to protect the paper medical record when in their possession.
   2. Assume responsibility for returning records in good condition at the designated time.
   3. Hospital Medical Records - Do not lock medical records in offices overnight.
   4. Secure or ensure that records are secure when unattended.
**Procedure:**

A. Medical records must be stored in a safe and secure environment to safeguard their physical integrity and confidentiality.

B. Medical records will be filed in a systematic manner in cabinets, filing units or in boxes. Chronology is essential and close attention shall be given to assure that documents are filed properly and that information is entered in the correct encounter medical record for the correct patient.

C. Medical records should never be left unattended.

D. Original records may not be removed from Truman Medical Centers facilities except by court order, subpoena, or as otherwise required by law.

E. Access to medical record areas will be limited to authorized staff only.

F. Medical Records should be stored in locations that have sprinkler systems and/or where fire extinguishers are easily accessible.

G. Paper medical records should not be stored at or near water pipelines or heating/cooling vents.

H. All records locations should utilize some form of tracking system whether manual or electronic to track locations of medical records including those stored in boxes.

I. All doors to file areas should have some form of badge/key pad access or lock to ensure safety of records. Doors that have locks should be locked when area is unattended. Records that are filed in locked cabinets need to be in a secure location.

J. Staff should check employee name badges before releasing any records. Request for copies of medical records should be released in accordance with the Release of Medical Records policy.

K. Only authorized staff are allowed to retrieve records, file records and attach loose documents in locations where records are stored.

L. Health Information Management Department Hospital Hill is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to assure security of medical records and to provide records for patient care. Health Information Management Department Lakewood is staffed 7 am to 5:30 pm Mon and Fri, 7 am to 11 pm Tues, Wed and Thurs, and limited hours Sat and Sun. The Lakewood Director of Shifts (DSO) will pull records when HIM staff is unavailable for Lakewood patient care visits.

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M. Records stored on filling units should be stored at least 3 inches from the floor and 18 inches from the bottom of sprinkler heads. Records should never be stored directly on the floor.

N. Records should never be stored in direct sunlight.

O. It is recommended that all areas that store medical records have a moderate supply of emergency supplies including plastic tarp and absorbent towels and wipes in event of water damage or flooding. In the event of flood damage records should be moved to higher ground immediately to minimize loss. If records are wet, contact the HIM director for direction on how to preserve the records.

P. Special care must be exercised with medical records protected by the State and Federal laws covering mental health records, alcohol and substance abuse records, reporting forms for suspected elder/dependent adult abuse, child abuse reporting, etc. Refer to Uses and Disclosure of Protected Health Information.

Q. If medical records are scanned into electronic health record systems, originals should be maintained according to the Record Retention or department policy.

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