

Release of Information Guidelines

An individual may obtain limited information from the Facility Directory (census) about an inpatient if they ask for the patient by name and the patient has not opted out*.

- Staff may provide the following:
 1. General location in the facility (including room # and phone #), and
 2. A general statement of condition that does not include specific medical information (e.g., good, fair, serious, critical).

*To determine if a patient has opted out you can check the unit census display in A2K (LCR, SMS, LRCWeb). If the patient has opted out an 'O' will be present where the other patient codes are stored (R, X, S, etc). Other codes may have a similar effect.

You may release information to Family Members and Friends who are involved in the patient's care or payment for care using the following guidelines:

1. **When the patient is present:** obtain verbal consent from the patient (or provide the patient the opportunity to object). In some situations, you may infer from the circumstance that the patient does not object (for example, the patient is accompanied by a family member to the exam room).
2. **When the patient is not present:** refer the caller to the patient himself or herself. Professional judgment may be used to release information if the patient has verbally consented based on the family member's documented involvement, but first verify the identity and involvement of the individual requesting information (if the family member is involved in the care it can be presumed that they will know some demographic information about the patient, such as phone, date of birth, address). Under certain circumstances, professional judgment may be used to determine if the release of information is in the patient's best interest (for example, picking up a prescription or medical supplies on a patient's behalf).
3. **When the patient is present but is unconscious or incapacitated:** This may be a stepwise process:
 - a. Verify that there are no restrictions in the patient's chart to the release of information;
 - b. Verify the identity and involvement of the individual requesting information (if the family member is involved in the care it can be presumed that they will know some demographic information about the patient, such as phone, date of birth, address). Professional judgment shall be used in making determinations, and;
 - c. Share the information with just those limited individuals who are directly involved in making decisions about the patient's care or payment for care. If other people who are not directly involved in the patient's care (for example, a cousin, neighbor or friend) want to find out information about the patient, refer them to the few individuals who are directly involved in the patient's care. Those family members can determine the appropriate information to share with others.
4. **As a result of a signed Authorization by the patient:** If a signed authorization has been obtained and remains valid, the health information referenced in the authorization may be released.