

# **Burke County Emergency Services**

## **Confidentiality and Commitment to Security**

### **Purpose**

To outline and define Burke County Emergency Services' commitment and system designed to protect the confidentiality of health information. Ensuring the confidentiality and security of all reports, records, and files containing client names and/or identifying information is of critical importance. Breaches of security could undermine public trust in the division and thereby hinder efforts to prevent and control morbidity and mortality from disease and injury.

### **Responsible Personnel**

All staff of Burke County Emergency Services

### **Policy**

Burke County Emergency Services is committed to ensure confidentiality of all reports, records, and files containing client names and/or identifying information. The Patient Care Report is mandated by the State of North Carolina. HIPPA mandates the confidentiality of all information and records of patient care and conditions whether publicly or privately held. All Emergency Service Staff will follow this policy, review and sign it annually. Breaches of confidentiality could constitute grounds for dismissal and/or criminal penalties.

### **Procedure**

1. All client records and other medical records that contain identifying information must be kept in a secured area unless being processed by designated staff. Files must be secured or the space/office in which they are located must be locked during non-business hours. No loose papers will be left exposed. Patient information must be kept in closed files.
2. The confidentiality of medical or case records with personal identifiers maintained in a computer database or other electronic medium must be protected in such a manner that unauthorized persons do not and cannot obtain access to the records.
3. Access to the records, files, and databases described above in 1 and 2 are restricted to staff whose job responsibilities require that they have access to the information and who have been authorized to have access by the appropriate staff person(s). Staff will carry out the responsibilities delegated to the Emergency Services by State Law.
4. Nothing in this policy should be construed to prohibit the provision to the NC Industrial Commission of those medical records required to be submitted to the commission or litigants in a Workers Compensation Case by Chapter 97 of the NC General Statutes.

5. Access by staff to computer data containing client identifying information is restricted to those directly involved in the work that have a "Need to Know". Data will also be user specific/password protected and will require personal identification passwords to access the data.
6. Staff will write "Confidential" on all mail containing client identifying information.
7. All known or suspected breaches of confidentiality must be documented according to policy and brought to the attention of the Emergency Services Director for appropriate disciplinary action, when indicated, up to and including dismissal.