

VCU Health System

Virginia Commonwealth University

MCV Hospitals and Physicians

Standards of Professional Conduct

Introduction

Discussions of ethical behavior and integrity are increasingly important in today's health care environment and are the cornerstone of the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System's Standards of Professional Conduct ("The Standards") approved by our VCUHS Authority Board of Directors. The Standards four guiding principles of providing dignified patient care, compliance with laws and regulations, responsibility for actions and behaviors, and accuracy and accountability are the core of the VCUHS mission and reflect the values of our organization. These areas are among our highest priorities as health care providers and require our most careful attention and oversight. The Standards and Guidelines set forth describe expectations for professional conduct and the Health System's commitment to promoting integrity and maintaining high standards in all of our activities. The Standards do not, however, provide easy instruction for all situations, given the complex nature of the health care environment and the difficult issues often confronted. You are encouraged to seek advice from your supervisor, Human Resources, the General Counsel's office, Compliance Services, or other appropriately designated resources when dealing with conduct related matters.

VCUHS Guiding Principles

- ***Dignified Patient Care*** - Treat all patients with dignity and respect recognizing the diverse cultures and communities served by the Health System.
- ***Compliance with Laws and Regulations*** - Adhere to all applicable standards of professional practice, all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, and demonstrate ethical behavior in all aspects of business.
- ***Responsibility for Actions and Behaviors*** - Report any concern you may have that a patient's care may be at risk or that staff are not meeting ethical or legal standards.
- ***Accuracy and Accountability*** - Provide and maintain accurate and reliable financial records and raise any questions or concerns related to compensation, expenses, or

patient billing and reimbursement to your supervisor or other members in the chain of command.

Patient Care

VCUHS will provide health care in a manner that is of the highest quality, clinically appropriate, cost efficient, and takes into account a patient's right to be involved in their choice of care.

All care given to patients must be consistent with accepted standards of care and based upon medical necessity not the patient's ability to pay. Providing an appropriate level of quality care involves informing the patient about the alternatives and risks associated with the care they may receive and obtaining consent of the patient, legal representative or family for the performance of all procedures. The VCUHS focus on patient centered care also requires health care providers, to the extent possible and appropriate, to involve patients and family members in the clinical decision-making and plan of care process.

Workplace Responsibilities

VCUHS is committed to providing a work environment of fairness, dignity, and respect for all employees.

VCUHS is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to providing a work environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and/or harassment and workplace violence. If an employee or affiliated individual believes they are being subjected to discriminatory, harassing, or violent behavior, or observe or receive a complaint regarding such behavior, they have an obligation to report it to their supervisor, Human Resources, or other members of the chain of command. Retaliation against individuals for raising claims of discrimination, harassment, or workplace violence is prohibited. Retaliation violations can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Employees must not engage in actions which create a threat to the health, safety, or security of our patients and other employees. Therefore, reporting to work or being at work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited and is considered cause for termination.

Business Information and Records

Reasonable efforts will be made to protect personal and confidential information of VCUHS, its patients, and employees. All patient care and institutional records are the property of VCUHS. Staff responsible for the preparation and retention of the records shall ensure that records are accurately prepared and maintained in a confidential manner and location as prescribed by law and Health System policy.

While working at or with VCUHS, employees may learn or have access to confidential or proprietary information. This information entrusted to you by VCUHS, our patients, and customers must be maintained with the highest level of discretion and confidentiality.

Confidential and/or proprietary information includes, but is not limited to:

- Patient information, including information in electronic medical records;
- Employee information that would be considered confidential without prior authorization;
- Information about VCUHS financial or other performance or existing and/or potential contracts;
- Sign-on codes, usernames, and passwords;
- VCUHS systems and software;
- Other sensitive information.

Conflicts of Interest

All VCUHS staff shall conduct clinical and personal business in a manner that avoids perceived conflicts of interest.

Employees and individuals affiliated with VCUHS must avoid gaining business or financial interest or participating in activities or services that would, or would appear to:

- Create an excessive demand upon their time and attention while scheduled to be at VCUHS;
- Use their position within the Health System to influence a VCUHS decision in which an employee has a financial interest;
- Use the VCUHS name and/or logo to promote or sell non-VCUHS products or services;
- Promote or receive an improper financial or other benefit, either directly or indirectly, to you, another employee, family member, a VCUHS customer or patient, partner, contractor, or service provider.

The above are limited examples of potential conflicts of interest, inquiries regarding potential or perceived conflicts of interest and transactions constituting a conflict of interest must be directed to the General Counsel's office.

Competitive Behavior

VCUHS and its staff will comply with all applicable antitrust laws.

Antitrust laws protect patients and providers by promoting competition and ensuring that patients have health care choices that reflect an open market. Staff should be knowledgeable about activities that may be in violation of antitrust laws. Examples of forbidden activities include, but are not limited to the following:

- Agreements, or attempts to agree, with a competitor to artificially set prices or salaries, to divide markets, to restrict productivity, or to restrain new competitors from the market;
- Disclosure of pricing information to competitors that is not normally available to the public; and
- Unfair business practices, boycotts (including agreements to deal or not to deal with certain patients, providers, or payors) deception, intimidation, misappropriation of business information, and similar unfair practices.

Coding and Billing of Patient Services and Cost Reporting

Staff responsible for the charging, coding, billing, documentation, and accounting for patient care services for the purpose of billing governmental, private or individual payors must comply with all applicable state and federal regulations, payor contracts, and specific policies and procedures.

VCUHS will bill only for services actually provided and will collect only the amount to which it is entitled. VCUHS will not tolerate any instance in which billing misrepresents the actual services performed. The following are guidelines to assist in the performance of coding and billing activities:

- All claims for services provided must be accurately and completely coded and submitted to the appropriate payor in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, contractual obligations, and VCUHS policies and procedures.
- All documentation of orders and services must be complete, legible, and accurately reflect the services or items provided.
- All patients will be consistently and uniformly charged. Discounts will be appropriately reported. Items and services will be consistently described so that comparability can be established among payors.
- Credit balances on patient accounts must be processed in a timely manner and in accordance with applicable rules and regulations.
- All claims submitted to any payor for payment must *only* be for those services or items that are medically necessary and consistent with generally accepted clinical standards for the diagnosis and treatment of disease and/or injury. Services requested by a patient that do not meet the medical necessity criteria may be provided if in accordance with VCUHS policies and procedures.

Cost Reporting to the Government and Other Third Party Payors

Staff responsible for the preparation and submission of cost reports must ensure that all cost reports submitted to government and other third party payors are properly prepared and documented in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

All VCUHS staff responsible for preparation of cost reports must ensure that all costs are properly classified, allocated to the correct cost centers, and supported by verifiable data. Any errors identified in the preparation or submission of cost reports must be corrected in a timely and accurate manner and documented according to applicable regulations and Health System procedures.

Contact with External Entities

VCUHS is committed to maintaining open and accurate communication with respect to third party inquiries for information and on-site visits and providing privacy and security to our employees, patients, and visitors.

University News Services is the spokesperson for the Health System. Any inquiries or requests from the media or a third party involving VCUHS business, patients, documents or interview requests should be directed to your supervisor, the General Counsel's office, when appropriate, or other appropriately designated individuals.

Any government requests for information in conjunction with a federal inquiry or investigation should first be directed to your immediate supervisor, the General Counsel, Risk Management, or Compliance Services. Staff must obtain positive identification of the investigator and identify the subject of the request and information requested before consenting to interviews or providing an investigator with confidential patient, employee, or other VCUHS records, either in written or verbal form.

You have a legal right to consult with your supervisor, the General Counsel, Compliance Services, or where appropriate, University Counsel before answering questions surrounding an investigation.

Staff are expected to: cooperate with any government, internal, or external investigation; must never alter or destroy VCUHS records in anticipation of an investigation. Staff should also never attempt to persuade other employees to make false or misleading statements to an investigator or to alter or destroy records.

Compliance

The Standards apply to all VCUHS staff, including but not limited to administration, faculty, physicians, fellows, residents, and students. Moreover, The Standards are applicable to all persons not employed by VCUHS but serving as the Health System's staff, contractors, vendors, and consultants.

