

NOTHING CONTAINED IN THIS POLICY OR IN ANY OTHER POLICY CREATES A CONTRACT RIGHT. CONSISTENT WITH SOUTH CAROLINA LAW, ALL EMPLOYEES ARE EMPLOYED "AT WILL," WHICH MEANS THAT THE EMPLOYEE HAS THE RIGHT TO TERMINATE HIS OR HER EMPLOYMENT AT ANY TIME, WITH OR WITHOUT NOTICE OR CAUSE, AND THAT PALMETTO HEALTH RETAINS THE SAME RIGHT. EXCEPTIONS TO THE POLICY THAT ALL EMPLOYEES ARE EMPLOYED "AT WILL" MAY BE MADE ONLY BY WRITTEN AGREEMENT SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT AND CEO OF PALMETTO HEALTH.

## Confidentiality

Human Resources  
Policy No. #030

Effective: August 1, 2007  
Updated: November 2011

**Policy Statement:** Palmetto Health recognizes that patients expect and deserve that all information pertaining to them be strictly limited only to those who need to know that information. Palmetto Health considers a breach of confidentiality to be a serious event and considers any inappropriate disclosure of patient or business information a violation of trust that jeopardizes the mission and survival of the organization.

### Guidance:

1. Those associated with Palmetto Health shall not seek, use, or disseminate information for which they do not have a need or right to know to perform their direct responsibilities. This also applies to employees accessing their own personal information. Refer to "Accessing PHI" policy in Compliance Manual.
2. Those who have access to patient and business information must protect and utilize this information with the greatest level of care. Failure to protect confidential information will result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge.
3. **Confidential patient and business information is produced, transmitted, and displayed through a variety of media and methods. These methods include but are not limited to: person to person conversations, electronic mail, computer display screens, printed reports and documents, telephone (land line) and cell phone (radio transmission) conversations, fax machines, copy machines, computer disks, etc. Employees must at all times take precautions to prevent inadvertent disclosure of confidential information, including information that is being shred or destroyed.**
4. Those who do not need access to patient or business information but gain access willfully, and as a result, breach either the integrity of patient care or the business operations of the organization, will be disciplined up to and including discharge.
5. Those who gain access to patient information inadvertently, whether within the organization or outside it, have a responsibility to protect the confidentiality of patient and business information and to take action to stop the further dissemination of confidential information.
6. The degree to which the integrity of this policy is breached will determine the level of discipline.
7. Statements of confidentiality will be provided and acknowledged by all associated with Palmetto Health.
8. Requests for references, addresses, telephone numbers, etc. pertaining to employees of Palmetto Health are to be referred to Human Resources for appropriate action. Health information maintained by Employee Health on employees is confidential and may not be accessed by anyone other than the Employee Health staff.

9. Requests for medical information about patients or requests for copies of patient records are to be referred to the Health Information Management department. Refer to the Palmetto Health Compliance Manual, Accessing PHI Policy.
  
10. **All inquiries** by the news media, law enforcement agencies, etc., for interviews, patient condition status reports, or any other coverage involving the hospital, employees, patients, or visitors shall be referred to Corporate Communications or its designate as appropriate. When Corporate Communications is closed, these requests should be referred to the administrative representative on-call at the appropriate facility. **Refer to Palmetto Health Media/Public Requests for Patient Information Policy.**

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Gwen Hill, Interim Vice President  
Human Resources

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Charles D. Beaman, Jr., President and CEO  
Palmetto Health

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information about this policy, contact Human Resources 803-296-5221.