



# TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

## Operating Policy and Procedure

**HSCEP OP:** 52.05, **Texting of Protected Health Information (PHI)**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to define accepted practices, responsibilities and procedures for the transmission of PHI via secure text messaging between clinic providers and staff. Text messaging is a form of informal communication that can be beneficial if used appropriately.

**REVIEW:** This HSCEP OP will be reviewed by July of each odd-numbered year (ONY) by the TTUHSC El Paso Institutional Privacy Officer, the TTUHSC El Paso Information Security Officer, and the HIPAA Privacy and Security Committee, with recommendations for revisions forwarded to the Institutional Compliance Officer and Clinical Health Information Officer.

### **POLICY/PROCEDURE:**

#### **I. Eligibility**

Secure messaging solutions will be used by TTUHSC El Paso health care professionals when texting PHI. Secure messaging solutions must be approved by the Office of Institutional Compliance and the Information Technology Department.

A. TTUHSC El Paso faculty, staff, and students can use a personal smart phone, TTUHSC El Paso managed computer workstation or device, or a personal mobile device to access the secure messaging solution.

#### **II. Scope of Use**

A. Text messaging is considered informal communication, and its delivery is not guaranteed.

B. Secure text messaging is not intended for use in emergency situations.

C. All messages that reference a patient should include two patient identifiers in order to confirm patient identity.

D. Secure texting should **not** be used as a method to communicate patient orders.<sup>1</sup> Patient orders should be entered directly by the Provider into the Electronic Medical Record. In instances where this is not possible, telephone communication should be used for placing or modifying patient orders. This allows the read-back verification process to take place appropriately.

E. Text messages are not stored as part of the medical record. Text messages are automatically deleted after 7 days and archived for 30 days.

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<sup>1</sup> The Joint Commission Record of Care, Treatment, and Services Standards frequently asked questions regarding Texting Orders: "it is not acceptable for physicians or licensed independent practitioners to text orders for patients to the hospital or other healthcare setting. This method provides no ability to verify the identity of the person sending the text and there is no way to keep the original message as validation of what is entered into the medical record".

### **III. Ownership**

- A. All data transmitted via the secure texting application is the sole property of TTUHSC El Paso. TTUHSC El Paso has absolute right of access to all of the data sent via secure texting and may exercise its right whenever it is deemed appropriate.
- B. Audits by the Office of Institutional Compliance or IT Security will be conducted as needed to determine compliance with TTUHSC El Paso policy guidelines.

### **IV. Registration**

- A. Those needing the secure messaging service must first register with Clinical Information Systems in order to be added to the application directory. Contact the Clinical Information Systems Department at 915.215.4022 for registration.

### **V. Security**

- A. Refer to TTUHSC El Paso IT Policy 56.01, Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources for additional guidelines on mobile device security.
- B. Users of mobile devices are responsible for physical security of these devices at all times. In the event a mobile device becomes lost or stolen, the responsible TTUHSC El Paso faculty, staff, or student shall report the incident immediately to his/her supervisor, the TTUHSC El Paso Privacy Officer (IPO), and the TTUHSC El Paso Information Security Officer (ISO).
- C. Refer to TTUHSC El Paso IT Policy 56.01 that users should never share logins, passwords, or other security measures and should not disable or alter any security measures configured on a mobile device.

### **VI. Right to Change Policy**

TTUHSC El Paso reserves the right to change, modify, amend or rescind this policy in whole or in part at any time without the consent of employees.