



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 (IT Security and Electronic Medical Records (EMR)

A. TTUHSC El Paso faculty, staff, and students can use a personal smartphone, TTUHSC El Paso managed computer workstation or device, or a personal mobile device to access a TTUHSC El Paso approved secure messaging solution such as secured messenger, Electronic Medical Record Flags, HIPAA Breach through University Medical Center.

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 to confirm patient identity.
- D. Secure texting should **not** be used as a method to communicate patient orders.¹ 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.

¹ 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. 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 the 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.

IV. 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.