

# 1 Patient Confidentiality

## Policy

All health personnel have a duty under the Health Services Act to ensure that confidentiality of information relating to patients is maintained at all times.

## Rationale

To ensure that patient records are handled to maintain patient privacy. This includes associated patient documents and registers.

## Procedure

Staff are not to release any information to any **unauthorised** person, including patients or their families. Patients requesting results should be referred to their own doctor. If the doctor is unknown to the patient, or is unavailable, the enquiry should be referred to the Patient Advocate or to Medical Administration. Other people requesting such information either in writing, in person or by telephone should be referred to Medical Administration.

Conversations regarding confidential information should not be conducted in the presence of or where they can be overheard by, unauthorised persons. Staff should be particularly conscious of this possibility in dining areas and other public areas.

Health and medical records should always be regarded as confidential. Members of staff do not have automatic right to access patient information by virtue of their profession or employment category.

In maintaining confidentiality staff should:

- acknowledge that patients have a right to information privacy
- be aware of potential breaches of confidence
- be aware of possible harmful effects of breaches
- receive accurate information about persons and organisations having legal right to have access to the information contained in the records
- be aware that other persons and organisations have no right to such information

Police do not have unrestricted access to patient records so ensure any approach for information is supported by a relevant authorisation. If there is any doubt, refer the Police to a medical officer.

Staff should be particularly careful when discussing patient related matters by phone.

All media requests for information must be referred to the District Manager.

Reference: Queensland Health Code of Conduct March 2006