

SECTION: CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS**NUMBER:****TITLE: RELEASE OF CLIENT INFORMATION TO MEDIA****PAGE: 1 of 2**

POLICY

1. Central Health will not release to the media any information which is specific to a client without the permission of that client/legal representative.
2. Central Health cannot confirm if an individual is in receipt of services or care of the organization without permission of that client/legal representative.
3. Details about a client can be released to the media ONLY if the client or their legal representative has provided signed consent to the release of information.
4. NO INFORMATION may be released regarding a client who is identified as a "no information client". This means that the patient, a family member or the police have requested no information be released on this person including whether the person is or is not in our care.
5. Central Health will not comment on any issues that are the subject of criminal investigations or before the courts.

Special circumstances*a. Prominent Persons*

Unfortunately in today's society, persons whose activities are in the public eye (i.e. major political figures, noted dignitaries), forfeit to an indefinable degree the rights of privacy generally ascribed to less prominent individuals.

High profile patients will be advised to have information about their condition released by their own sources, which may have the liberty to release detailed information Central Health is unable to provide. In such cases, Corporate Communications will refer all media to that source.

Should the high profile patient choose not to release information through their own source, Central Health must have written consent before any personal medical information (including acknowledgment of their presence) can be released.

b. Public Health Risks

At the direction of Medical Officer of Health, consent to release information to the media is not required in situations deemed to pose a risk to public health. A patient's name must never be released without consent except in instances where the Medical Officer of Health determines that a public health risk may be present. In this circumstance, every effort will be made to notify a client and/or their family prior to releasing information to the media/public.

SECTION: CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

NUMBER:

TITLE: RELEASE OF CLIENT INFORMATION TO MEDIA

PAGE: 2 of 2

PROCEDURE

1. Details regarding a client such as status/condition, name, age, circumstance leading to hospitalization and home community shall not be released to the media without written consent from the client. If the client is unable to provide consent due to age and/or condition, written consent must be obtained from the parent/legal guardian or Next of Kin.
2. Once a client or designate has consented to release of information to the media, **ONLY** a one-word condition code will be provided to describe the clients status/condition. One word condition codes are limited to the following four terms:
 - **GOOD** – vital signs such as pulse, temperature and blood pressure are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious and comfortable. Outlook for recovery is good or excellent.
 - **FAIR** – vital signs are stable or within normal limits. Patient is conscious but may be uncomfortable. Outlook of recovery is favorable.
 - **SERIOUS** – vital signs may be unstable or not within normal limits. Patient is acutely ill and may not be conscious. Outlook for recovery is questionable with a chance of improvement.
 - **CRITICAL** – vital signs are unstable or not within normal limits. Patient has major complications and may not be conscious. Outlook for recovery is questionable. Death may be imminent.
3. At any time, the client or their legal representative can request that no further information be provided to media. This request should (whenever possible) be made in writing. The client would then become identified as a “no information client”.
4. All news releases and other written information for release to the media must be approved by the Director of Corporate Communications and issued by the Corporate Communications Department.
5. When a news release identifies a Central Health spokesperson, it is expected that the designated spokesperson make themselves available for interviews or comment as arranged by Corporate Communications. Staff will always be aware that they have been named in a news release prior to distribution.
6. Letters to the Editor on behalf of Central Health or by a staff member wishing to identify him or herself as an employee of Central Health must be approved by the Director of Corporate Communications and issued by Corporate Communications. While personal letters from staff are not covered by this policy, they are subject to Central Health Human Resources policies for employee conduct. Personal letters cannot be sent on Central Health letterhead or use similar identification.

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