	Name of Manual: <b>HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND PRIVACY</b>	Number:  <b>4-b-70</b>
	Section: <b>PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY: PROTECTION OF PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION</b>	
	Name: <b>FAXING CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION</b>	Page: <b>1 of 6</b>

## PURPOSE

To outline the responsibility for the use of fax machines for the transmission of personal health and other confidential information relating to clients, employees and business information of Central Health.

## POLICY

Personal, personal health and confidential business information (hereinafter referred to as information) ***must only be transmitted via fax when required for immediate care/service of the client or when the information is critical to Central Health's operations and time restrictions apply.*** Where a more secure method for communication of information is available, faxing **must not** be used.

Information that is of a non-urgent nature must be transferred as per policy 4-b-20 [Secure Transfer of Confidential Information by Mail, Courier or In Person](#).

Faxing of information internally within the same Central Health facility is **not permitted**.

Client or authorized representative requesting their information to be faxed **must be for immediate care/service only**. Client or authorized representative is required to submit their request in writing or complete FRM-PHI004 [Authorization for Disclosure of Personal Health Information](#).

Fax only the minimal amount of information required.

When faxing information, completion of a designated Central Health Fax Cover Sheet is required and the fax cover sheet must be faxed with the required information.

**The sender of the information being faxed must confirm that the information has been received by the intended recipient as outlined in this policy.**

All communication of information via fax must be conducted in a safe and secure manner in accordance with this policy.

Fax machines must be located in a secure area where they can be monitored and accessed only by individuals who are authorized to handle the information.

This policy applies to all Central Health's employees, health care professionals/providers, trustees, volunteers, students, contractors, and any other individual affiliated with Central Health that is authorized to fax information.

### **Guidelines**

- Where feasible and appropriate, use automatic dialing (pre-program) features that have already been tested for accuracy. Ensure the directories are updated regularly, test destination numbers on a regular basis and update directories when notified of a change. (This eliminates errors in transmission from misdialing and the use of outdated fax numbers).
- Where possible, fax machines must be set up automatically to generate a fax transmission report or produce manually generated reports after each use. These reports confirm that the faxed information reached the number that was entered on the fax machine. The sender of each fax must confirm successful transmission of the faxed information by checking this report after the fax has been sent with the correct number that the fax transmission should have been sent.
- If the fax machine is equipped with a feature that allows electronic storage of the fax messages and use of a password to retrieve the faxes, use this feature and request sender to make sure that you must supply a password to retrieve the information.
- If the fax machine is equipped to encrypt information, use this feature when compatible for sending or receiving information.
- If sending or receiving fax messages using a computer modem, confirm that the other users cannot access the fax messages without a password. If the fax machine has digital storage capabilities, purge on a regular basis.
- Decommissioning/disposing of fax machines that are no longer required must be addressed through the Information Management and Technology Department.
- Where possible, designate an individual(s) responsible in each department/program to receive and distribute faxed information to ensure consistency within the parameters of this policy.

### **PROCEDURE**

#### **Request Received to Fax Information Outside of a Central Health Facility**

1. Requestor must fax a request on the requestor's organizational letterhead/fax cover sheet, identifying the information required to be faxed, the requestor's name, organization, fax number and telephone number.
2. Sender to inform the requestor of the anticipated time the information will be faxed.
3. Inform the requestor to notify sender via telephone or e-mail confirmation of successful transmission of faxed information.

2. Where client specific information is being requested, refer to policy [Positive Client Identification](#) and ensure that the request for information falls within Central Health's disclosure of information policies.
3. Complete a designated Central Health fax cover sheet to be attached to the information being faxed.
4. **Prior to sending a fax, the sender must confirm the accuracy of the fax number. Once fax number is confirmed, the sender must ensure that the fax number keyed in the fax machine display window has been keyed correctly prior to transmitting the information.**
5. **Await confirmation of receipt of the successful transmission of the faxed information from the requestor/intended recipient as communicated. If confirmation is not received within the predetermined timeframe, contact the requestor/intended recipient to verify that faxed information has been received.**
6. Document on the fax transmission sheet or fax cover sheet:
  - a. a description of the information disclosed;
  - b. indicate that the information was received as confirmed by requestor/intended recipient;
  - c. where client specific information is faxed, retain the fax transmission sheet or fax cover sheet on the client's health record; and
  - d. where other confidential information is faxed, retain the fax transmission sheet or fax cover sheet on the appropriate file i.e.: (human resources, administration, etc.).
7. If informed that the faxed information has not been received by the intended recipient, refer to **Fax Breach** procedure outlined below.

### **Where Central Health Requires Information to be Faxed**

1. Inform the intended recipient that the information is being faxed.
2. Inform the intended recipient to notify sender via telephone or e-mail confirmation of successful transmission of faxed information.
3. Where client specific information is required to be faxed, refer to policy Positive Client Identification.
4. Complete **Steps 3 to 7** as outline above.

### **Receiving Faxes**

1. Designate an individual(s) responsible in each department/program to receive and distribute faxed information.
2. Individuals who are expecting information to be faxed, should arrange to be at the fax machine when the information is being transmitted, or otherwise retrieve information as soon as possible.
3. Upon receipt of faxed information, verify the number of pages received as compared to the number of pages identified on the fax cover sheet to determine accuracy. Notify sender if page numbers are not accurate.
4. Staple all of the information together.
5. The receiver of the faxed information is responsible for its security upon receipt.

6. If an expected fax fails to arrive, immediately contact the sender and advise sender of its failure to arrive.
7. If faxed information is received in error or unclear distribution, where possible contact the sender of the faxed information to determine correct recipient. Confirm with sender whether the misdirected fax should be returned to sender (by means other than fax), or destroyed.
8. If the sender or intended recipient of a fax cannot be determined, proceed to securely destroy the information by placing in Central Health's assigned shredding containers.
9. **For Central Health fax breaches, please refer to the fax breach procedure as outlined below.**

### **Faxing Breach**

Where faxed information is mistakenly faxed to the wrong recipient, or once aware that a fax transmission has failed to reach the intended recipient:

1. The sender must:
  - a. check the internal logging system of the fax machine to obtain the number to which the transmission was sent;
  - b. contact recipient and request that the misdirected fax be returned to sender in hard copy form via mail;
  - c. notify manager/director of department/program; and
  - d. enter an occurrence report as per Central Health's occurrence reporting process for all internal and external fax breaches.
2. The manager/director must refer to policy 4-g-10 [Privacy Breach](#).

### **DEFINITIONS**

<b>Business Information</b>	<p>Information with respect to Central Health's business that is not publicly disclosed by the organization. Employees / affiliates may come in contact with such information that is not generally known to the public as they perform their duties. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• legal matters involving the organization that are not public knowledge,</li><li>• financial information that is not available in Central Health's annual report,</li><li>• contractual agreements with vendors, consultants, contractors, and third parties (The confidentiality of this information may be written into the contract, e.g. non-disclosure of the cost of the service),</li><li>• information about intellectual property such as development of new technology and treatments or unpublished reports,</li><li>• information pertaining to Central Health's information technology access and security systems.</li></ul>
-----------------------------	---

<b>Disclose</b>	To make the information available or to release it but does not include a use of the information and "disclosure" has a corresponding meaning.
<b>Personal Health Information</b>	Identifying information in oral or recorded form about an individual that relates to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• information concerning the physical or mental health of the individual, including information respecting the individual's health care status and history and the health history of the individual's family;</li><li>• the provision of health care to the individual, including information respecting the person providing the health care;</li><li>• the donation by an individual of a body part or any bodily substance, including information derived from the testing or examination of a body part or bodily substance;</li><li>• registration information;</li><li>• payments or eligibility for a health care program or service in respect of the individual, including eligibility for coverage under an insurance or payment arrangement with respect to health care;</li><li>• an individual's entitlement to benefits under or participation in a health care program or service;</li><li>• information about the individual that is collected in the course of, and is incidental to, the provision of a health care program or service or payment for a health care program or service;</li><li>• a drug as defined in the <i>Pharmacy Act</i>, a health care aid, device, product, equipment or other item provided to an individual under a prescription or other authorization issued by a health care professional; or</li><li>• the identity of a person's representative as defined in Section 7 of the <i>Personal Health Information Act</i>.</li></ul>
<b>Personal Information</b>	Recorded information about an identifiable individual including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the individual's name, address, or telephone number,</li><li>• the individual's race, national or ethnic origin, color, or religious or political beliefs or associations,</li><li>• the individual's age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or family status,</li><li>• an identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to the individual,</li><li>• the individual's fingerprints, blood type or inheritable characteristics,</li><li>• information about the individual's health care status or history, including a physical or mental disability,</li></ul>

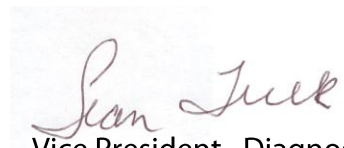
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• information about the individual's educational, financial, criminal, or employment status or history,</li><li>• the opinions of a person about the individual, and</li><li>• the individual's personal views or opinions.</li></ul>
--	---

## REFERENCES

Canadian Health Information Management Association, Facsimile Transmission of Health Information, Professional Practice Brief - PPB-00010.08

Information and Privacy Commissioner/Ontario – Guidelines on Facsimile Transmission Security, Ann Cavoukian, Ph.D., Revised January 2003  
<http://www.ipc.on.ca/images/Resources/fax-gd-e.pdf>

**APPROVED BY:**

  
Vice President - Diagnostics  
Information Management & COO

**APPROVAL DATE:** 14/JUN/2011  
**(R)** 25/AUG/2014

**This is a controlled document.** Printed copies of this document are not controlled. Users should view the electronic version of this policy located on Central Health's Intranet to ensure the most up to date policy is consulted.