

Media Code Guidelines

Tulsa Hospital Council

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1. Patient Information Eligible for Release.

- Inquiries *using the patient's first and last name* will permit release of the **patients one-word condition** without obtaining a written, HIPAA compliant authorization (“Authorization”). A patient’s location in the hospital will not be released to the media. **If the caller has no name, or an incomplete name, no information can be given**
- If the patient or patient representative has requested withholding information, often referred to as “no information patient”, (“opting out”), this restriction must be followed.
- If the hospital administration, patient’s physician, law enforcement, or patient (or patient’s representative) so require no information (patient status, location or any other information) can be given to the media or public about the patient.

2. Who can speak to Media or Public about patients?

- Patient inquiries by the media should be referred to an authorized hospital spokesperson, such as public relations personnel or designee.
- Media members on hospital property must be accompanied by an authorized hospital spokesperson. Hospitals may deny media access to any area at their discretion.
- On the back is an up-to-date listing of authorized spokespersons and their telephone numbers.

3. What About Minors or Other Patients Who Are Unable To Consent?

- Parents or legal guardians of minor patients may ask the Hospital to list the child as a “no information” patient.
- When the patient can’t express a preference, because of their medical condition, information about patient’s condition could be released if,
 - Release of information is in the best interest of the patient, as determined by Hospital administration.

4. How is Patient’s Condition Determined?

Only the patient’s one-word condition can be released

- Hospital has discretion to require physician or R.N. determination.
- If the patient’s condition has yet to be determined, simply advise caller that “The patient’s condition has not been determined at this time.”
- Definitions of patient condition:
 - Good.** Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious and comfortable. Indicators are excellent.
 - Fair.** Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious, but may be uncomfortable. Indicators are favorable.
 - Serious.** Vital signs may be unstable and not within normal limits. Patient is acutely ill. Indicators are questionable.
 - Critical.** Vital signs are unstable and not within normal limits. Patient may be unconscious. Indicators are unfavorable.

(Approved by American Hospital Association.)

5. When Can Condition Be Released?

- As long as guidelines apply, information on condition can generally be released at any time.
- However, information on **serious, critical** and **death** cases should not be released until after next of kin is notified.

6. What About Births and Deaths?

- Birth information may be released with an Authorization from the parent.
- Regarding decedents, reporting to law enforcement in criminal matters, reporting to coroners and medical examiners, reporting to funeral directors and reporting to organ procurement or tissue donation or transplantation organizations, is authorized by law. Media inquiries should be handled as follows:
 - *Cause and time of death* must come from attending physician and release must be approved by next of kin or legal representative of the decedent.
 - Media inquiries should be directed to hospital spokesperson and should not include specifics about natural, sudden, violent or accidental deaths, without permission of decedent’s next of kin or legal representative.

7. Topics Which Should Not Be Released or Confirmed.

Do not release any other information including, but not limited to:

- Information about patients who are not included in the hospital directory information, and as to psychiatric patients, no comment about admission status.
- Information about a patient other than one word condition unless authorized by the patient or their legal representative.
- Specifics about situations or causes of injury or death.
- The identity of a physician without the physician's consent.
- Legal requirements for reporting certain information to public authorities such as reporting child abuse does not open the door to reporting such cases and circumstances to media or the public.

8. Celebrities and Public Figures

- Celebrities, public figures and public officials are not subject to different standards than other patients when it comes to hospital releasing information to the public or media.
- In newsworthy cases, with Authorization from the patient, bulletins may be furnished by a hospital spokesperson. In sensitive cases, it may be advisable to consult physician or nurse manager. The physician or other health care providers should be notified and permission obtained, for disclosure of the provider's name to the media.

9. Photographs, Recordings and Interviews

- Photographs, audio or video recordings and patient interviews may not be obtained without the patient's or patient representative's Authorization. For procedures or surgeries it is recommended to consult the physician involved.
- Hospital policies may vary on this subject.
- Deceased patients may not be photographed or video recorded.

10. Hardship Appeals

- Public appeals on behalf of a patient for blood, donations, etc. should be referred to the hospital's spokesperson.

- Media requests for information related to a hardship appeal should be released only with patient or legal representative Authorization. The attending physician should be contacted to respond with more information. Such information may be relayed through the attending physician to the medical facility spokesperson, if the physician desires.

11. Disasters

- Patient Information may be disclosed to disaster relief organizations conducting disaster relief activities to notify family members or others responsible for a patient's care if in the professional judgment of the hospital such disclosure is in the patient's best interest and it is impracticable to obtain the patient's Authorization or permission.
- In the event of a city-wide disaster, hospitals will engage emergency plans for media communication.
- Refer inquiries to hospital spokesperson.

12. General Trends and Statistic Requests

- Inquiries on general information, trends and statistics regarding patient care and costs should be directed to the Tulsa Hospital Council, Chair of Public Relations Committee.