Example Patient Portal Policies and Procedures

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

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Shasta Community Health Center

The attached 8-page policy and procedures document from Shasta Community Health Center is a good example of a comprehensive step-by-step policy and procedures document. It was shared by the Center with expressed permission to use broadly without restrictions - subject to the conditions below. Names of individuals and vendors have been redacted.

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For further information about this resource please feel free to contact Jim Meyers, DrPH at jimmeyersdrph@gmail.com or 510-761-1609.

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER.

Ambulatory Clinic Policy and Procedure - Lubbock

Title:	**Patient Portal/MyTeamCare**	Policy Number:	**5.19**
		Version Number	**1**
Regulation Reference:	**Joint Commission IM.02.01.01, IM.02.02.03, PC.02.01.21**	Effective Date:	**3/2015**
		Original Approval:	**3/2015**

POLICY STATEMENT:

It is the policy of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) Ambulatory Clinics to encourage engagement with the patient in their own healthcare by the use of technology to deliver secure communication between patients and clinical teams.

This policy applies to all TTUHSC Schools who will provide patients and authorized family members or care managers the opportunity to access selected protected health information (PHI) using a secure, confidential website referred to in this policy as the patient "portal". The portal gives the patient 24 hour access to elements of their medical records and a means of communication with their clinical team Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with the exception of scheduled holiday times. The goal of such convenient, real-time access to PHI is to educate the patient about their existing health care conditions and treatments and engage the patient in assuming greater responsibility for, and participation in, their own health care decisions.

Patients can view their portal accounts anywhere they have Internet access. They can review parts of their medical record, request appointments, receive appointment reminders, cancel appointments, view their medication list, request prescriptions, immunizations, test results, obtain educational information, and maintain account information. Additional features and content may be added as it becomes available.

TTUHSC shall utilize a secure internet connection to maintain the privacy and security of each patient's PHI. This secure connection shall be accessible by each patient only after unique verification information has been established in accordance with this policy. The patient shall be solely responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of their own authentication information.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all TTUHSC Ambulatory clinics operated through its Schools.

PROCEDURE:

1. **Inviting and Activating a Portal Account.** Clinic personnel should invite the patient, parent or legal guardian to sign-up for the portal when a previously uninvited patient presents to the clinic for an episode of care and for each new patient.

2. **Portal Registration.** The proper process for portal registration is online at http://putter.cc/nursing/2014/8/18/portal-registration-refresher-training-and-new-items.html. This registration process may also be accomplished by telephone. Once a caller has been identified as the patient by providing his/her full name, address and phone number, his/her identity will be confirmed by providing correct answers to three of the following:

   a. Date of birth;

   b. Last four digits of social security number;

   c. Confidential security question;

   d. Medical Record Number (located on most bills);

   e. Name of last provider seen; or

f. Specific reason for last visit.

The patient is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of his/her username and password, and for any and all activities that are conducted through the patient portal.

3. **Secure Messaging.** All electronic communication with patients should occur through the patient portal. Messages outside of the patient portal system are not secure. Responses to any communication received from a patient through the portal should be sent the same day but no later than (2) business days. Messages do not go directly to the providers. Clinical staff will review and address all clinical issues and forward administrative issues to the proper person. They may forward the message directly to the provider, if necessary. The provider may respond to the patient or have staff complete the communication.

   a. Patients are advised on the portal itself that the portal is not appropriate for communicating urgent medical issues or anything that requires immediate attention. Patients are instructed on the portal site that if an emergency exists, to dial 911.

   b. When new information is available in the portal, a message is automatically sent to the patient's email address, notifying him or her to log in to view the information. There should not be any direct communication regarding clinical information to an external email address.

4. **Adolescent Patients.**

   a. Legal guardians or parents of patients age 0-12 may gain access to the portal account with proxy access for a child.

   b. When the child reaches the age of 13, the portal account will be automatically deactivated. At the age of 13, the adolescent child, with parental or legal guardian permission, may access the portal but the parent or legal guardian will not have access.

   c. Confidential adolescent access is encouraged to promote good communication between the adolescent and the provider. If the parent refuses to grant permission for access, then no one will have access from the ages of 13-17. Proxies or parents will only be granted access to an adolescent account under special circumstances including but not limited to mental incapacity or chronic severe illness.

   d. Parent information sheet, 5.19.A, MyTeamCare for Adolescents - Parent and Patient Information, outlines the TTUHSC policy for portal access for adolescent patients.

   e. After reading the information sheet, parents may sign the 5.19.B, Permission for Adolescent Access to MyTeamCare, allowing a child confidential access to his/her own portal account and to manage the password.

5. **Reason for Deactivating Portal Account.** A portal account may be deactivated for the following reasons:

   a. Patient reaches age 13.

   b. Patient requests a deactivation

   c. Legal or medical guardian change

   d. Patient terminates care

   e. Patient is terminated from care of TTUHSC

   f. Patient violates the portal terms, uses abusive language or use of the portal for emergencies.

   g. Patient expires.

h. If a TTUHSC employee feels that a patient is using abusive language or is repeatedly violating the terms and conditions of use, the employee should contact MyTeamCare at (877) 621-8014.

i. If the physician believes that access to the portal is not in the patient's best interest.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY:

This policy shall be recommended for approval by the Joint Ambulatory Policy Committee to the Council of Deans.

RESPONSIBILITY AND REVISIONS:

It is the responsibility of the Joint Ambulatory Policy Committee to review and initiate necessary revisions based on collaboration and input by and through Quality Improvement/Performance Improvement, Risk Management and the Office of Institutional Compliance.

RIGHT TO CHANGE POLICY:

TTUHSC reserves the right to interpret, change, modify, amend or rescind this policy in whole or in part at any time to reflect changes in policy and/or law.

CERTIFICATION:

This policy was approved by the Council of Deans on March 12, 2015.

ATTACHMENTS:

5.19.A – MyTeamCare for Adolescents - Parent and Patient Information

5.19.B – Permission for Adolescent Access to MyTeamCare

SHASTA COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

Patient Portal Policy and Procedures

Version #2

Document Owner: [redacted]	Date Created: [redacted]
Approver(s): [redacted]	Date Approved: [redacted]

Printed copies are for reference only. Please refer to the electronic copy for the latest version.

Policy: It is the policy of Shasta Community Health Center to provide patients and authorized family members or Care Managers the opportunity to enroll in a secure, confidential and easy to use Web site that gives patient and their families 24 hour access to elements of their medical records 24/7 and to their clinical team Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Purpose: The [redacted] Patient Portal uses technology to deliver secure communication between patients and clinical teams.

Scope:

A. Primary: All clinical and front office staff
B. Secondary: All other staff

Definitions:

C. Portal – A secure Web site where patient medical information is stored
D. Care Manager – An authorized person appointed to manage a patient's Portal information
E. Token – Documentation that authorizes a patient to enroll in the Portal
F. Enrollment – The process of setting up a Portal account
G. Activate - The patient process of activating an enrollment

Procedure:

A. Benefits of the Portal
   1. Patients can view their Portal accounts anywhere they have Internet access. They can review parts of their medical record, request appointments and receive appointment reminders, cancel appointments, access important health information, view their medication list, request prescriptions, immunizations, test results, obtain educational information, and maintain account information. More features will be added in the future.

B. Secure Messaging
   1. All electronic communication with patients must occur through [redacted] Patient Portal. Responses to any communication received from a patient through the Portal should be sent the same day or at least within (2) business days. Messages do not go directly to clinicians. RN's handle all clinical related traffic. They will speak directly with the clinician if necessary.
   2. Patients are advised that the Portal is not appropriate for communicating urgent medical issues or anything that requires immediate attention.
   3. When new information is available in the Portal, a message is automatically sent to the patient's email address, notifying him or her to log in to view the information.

There is never direct communication regarding clinical information to an external email address.

C. How to Send a Secure Message to a Patient
   1. Sending messages to a patient through the Portal is as easy as using email
   2. Access the [redacted] Mailbox
      a. Click the **Compose** button
      b. The [redacted] Message dialog box opens (Note: You can also right-click in the Communications Inbox message list and select **Compose New**)
      c. Click the **To** button arrow to select a patient, internal user or group
      d. Type the topic of the message in the **Subject** box
      e. Either type your message or insert a standard response in the message box (Note: The appearance of the Standard Responses docking window is controlled from the right-click menu)
      f. If needed, perform one or more of the following actions:
      g. Set the message properties
         i. Access the [redacted] Mailbox
         ii. From a new message, reply or draft, select the **Properties** tab
         iii. In the **Send this message at** section, choose either **Normal priority** or **High priority**. An exclamation point appears next to the message in the Message list. (Note: You can also click the **Priority** button to toggle your choice)
      h. Select the **I would like a read receipt for this message** check box to notify you that a message has been opened by the recipient(s)
      i. If the patient is a recipient, you can select the **I would like a notification if not read in __ hours** check box to notify you that the message has not been opened by the patient within the number of hours you specify
      j. Add any attachments (from a new message, reply or draft, select the **Attachments** tab. Each button has a functionality)
         i. Add a documents from the patient's chart (you must have a patient selected as a recipient)
         ii. Add an interactive Medical form (you can only add one interactive Medical form)
         iii. Add a [redacted] online form (you can only add one [redacted] online form at a time)
         Note: When adding a document from the patient's chart, a [redacted] online form or an Interactive Medical form, the *Add An Attachment* dialog box displays. Select each item as needed and click **OK**
         iv. Add a MS Word (doc or docx, Adobe Acrobat (pdf), image (.bmp, .jpg, .gif or .tif.) or HTML (.htm or .html) file
         Note: The *Attach File* dialog box displays. Select each item as needed and either click **OK** or **Open.**
         v. Remove an attached item

k. Complete your message as needed
l. Adding the original patient as a recipient:
   i. Access the [redacted] communications window
   ii. Open a message that was sent or forwarded by a [redacted] user or group that was originally initiated by a patient
   iii. Click the **To** button arrow and select **Add Original Patient**
m. Add a patient as a recipient for a [redacted] message:
   i. Access the [redacted] communications window
   ii. Either create a new message, open an existing message or open a draft
   iii. Click the **To** button arrow and select **Add Patient**
   iv. Enter your search criteria and click **Find**
   v. Select the appropriate patient from the search results and click **Open**
n. To add an internal user and/or group:
   i. Access the [redacted] communications window
   ii. Either create a new message, open an existing message or open a draft
   iii. Click the **To** button arrow and select **Add Users** (the *Select users and groups* dialog box displays)
   iv. Enter your search string and click the **Search** button
   v. Select the check box next to each user and/or group and then click **OK**
o. Adding patients as recipients to a [redacted] message using a memorized report:
   i. Access the [redacted] communications window
   ii. Either create a new message, open an existing message or open a draft
   iii. Click the **To** button arrow and select **Add Report**
   iv. Select a report from the **Report Type** list
   v. Double-click a report to open it
   vi. Choose **Patient** from the **Settings List**
   vii. Choose one of the following options:
      - **Include [redacted] Patients**
      - **Exclude [redacted] Patients**
      - **Only [redacted] Patients**
   viii. Select all other preferences as needed and then click **OK** (the patients found based on the reports results are added to the **To** field)
   ix. To view the list of patients included in the report, double-click the **"Reports results…"**
   x. Close the *Patient Set* and complete your message as needed
p. Adding patients as recipients to [redacted] messages using the Report Filter
   i. Access the [redacted] Communications window
   ii. Either create a new message, open an existing message or open a draft
   iii. Click the **To** button arrow and select **Report Filter**
   iv. Choose **Patient** from the **Settings List.** Select one of the following options:
      - **Include [redacted] Patients**
      - **Exclude [redacted] Patients**

- **Only [redacted] Patients**

v. Select all other preferences as needed and then click **OK**
vi. To view the list of patient included in the report, double-click the "**Reports results…**" link in the **To** field
vii. Close the *Patient Set* dialog box

q. To complete your message click the **Send** button to send the message to the recipient(s)
r. If the patient is a recipient click the **Send & Chart** button arrow to either:
   iv. Send the response and add it to a new locked encounter
   v. Send the response and add it to a new unlocked encounter
   vi. Send the response and add it to an existing unlocked encounter
   vii. Send the response without adding it to the patient's chart
s. Click the **Save** button to store the message in the Draft folder without sending it

D. Replying to [redacted] Messages
1. Double-click a message in the Communications Inbox folder
   a. At this point you can click a button to:
      i. Forward the message
      ii. Send a task
      iii. Mark the message complete
   b. If the patient is a recipient, you can click a button to:
      i. Open the patient's chart
      ii. Add the message to the patient's chart as either a new locked encounter, a new unlocked encounter or attach it to an existing unlocked encounter
   c. To respond to just the sender, click the **Reply** button
   d. To respond to the patient or all users included in the **To** field, click the **Reply** button arrow and make a selection (the *NextMD Message* dialog box opens and displays the contents of the original message)
      i. You can then include additional recipients
      ii. Set the message properties
      iii. Add any attachments
   e. Either type your response or insert a standard response in the **Message** section
   f. To complete your response, either:
      i. Click the **Send** button to send the message to the recent(s)
      ii. If the patient is a recipient, click the **Send & Chart** button arrow to either:
         - Send the response and add it to a new locked encounter
         - Send the response and add it to a new unlocked encounter
         - Send the response and add it to an existing unlocked encounter
         - Send the response without adding it to the patient's chart
      iii. Click the **Save** button to store the message in the Draft folder without sending it

E. Forwarding [redacted] messages
   1. Double-click a message in the Communications Inbox folder
   2. Click the **Forward** button
      i. The *Select users and groups* dialog box displays
      ii. Select the check box next to each user and/or group and then click **OK**
         - If you cannot find a user or group, enter a search string in the field provided and click the search button
   3. Complete your message as needed

F. Test Results are only available via messaging through the Portal at this time

G. Prescription Refill Requests
   1. Access the [redacted] Communications window.
   2. Double-click a message in the Prescriptions Inbox folder.
   3. At this point you can click a button to:
      a. Open the patient's chart to review medication history
      b. Assign a task
      c. Forward the request
      d. Add a comment
      e. Print the request
   4. To respond to the request click the **Respond** button.
   5. By default, the Prescription Renewal Status is set to "Approved."
   6. To reject the request, click **Approved**.
      a. The Prescription Renewal Status changes to "Denied."
      b. You must also add medication updates to the patient's chart via the Medication module
   7. Either enter your response or insert a standard response.
   8. Click the **Send & Chart** button arrow and choose one of the following actions:
      a. Send the response and add it to the patient's chart as a new locked encounter
      b. Send the response and add it to the patient's chart as a new unlocked encounter
      c. Send the response and add it to one of the patient's existing unlocked encounters
      d. Send the response, but do not add it to the patient's chart
      e. A response is sent to the patient and adds the request to the Prescription Outbox

H. Adolescent Patients
   1. Patients age 0-12 years have a Care Manager who is either a parent or guardian. At age 13 they may sign up for their own [redacted] account and they can access their record independently through the Portal and their own confidential email.
   2. Once an adolescent approaches age 13, we will send a message notifying the Care Manager that the adolescent's Portal account will end.

3. State law requires special handling of adolescent's records once they reach age 13. Parents still have full access through our Health Information Services Department, except for very specific conditions and diagnoses that require the adolescent's consent prior to releasing the information.

I. Locking a patient's Portal account
   2. A Portal account may be deactivated for the following reasons:
      a. A patient reaches age 13
      b. A patient requests a deactivation
      c. A care manager change request
      d. A patient terminates care
      e. The center discharges the patient
      f. A patient violates the Portal terms, uses abusive language or use of the Portal for emergencies.
      g. A patient expires
      h. If a SCHC employee feels that a patient is using abusive language or is repeatedly violating the terms and conditions of use, the employee should complete an incident report.

J. Automated Responses
   1. From a [redacted] dialog box, such as an appointment request, where you can enter comments, click Add Comments.
   2. Enter your comments. If needed, you can insert a standard response
   3. Right-click a text box where you can enter comments and select Show Standard Responses.
   4. To move the Standard Responses docking window to other parts of the Comments section or have it float outside, click the Standard Responses title bar and drag it. When you drag the window in the Comments section, a guide diamond that allows you dock the window to any side, displays. When the window is not docked, it floats on top of other windows.
   5. Drag the window over a guide diamond to dock it. When you dock the window, a set of buttons appear in the title bar.
   6. Use these buttons to hide, auto hide (displays a Standard Responses tab that expands when selected) or float the window.
   7. To preview the response as a Tool Tip, move your pointing device over a response.
   8. To view it in the preview pane, single-click the response.
   9. To insert a response, select it from the Standard Responses window and either drag it into the Comments/Reply section or double-click it.
   10. If needed, you can edit the response and/or right-click in the right pane to insert a practice or person/patient information (name, address, etc.) field.
   11. In needed, click OK to close the Enter comment dialog box.
   12. Complete your message/request as needed
   13. Click OK

14. Complete your message/request as needed.

K. Patient Enrollment/Sign Up
1. Patients and their legal guardians can sign up for Patient Portal in accordance to the terms and conditions of the Web site, if they have a Primary Care Clinician at SCHC and a valid email address.
2. At registration, Visit Coordinators (VCs) will check a patient's [redacted] status.
3. If a patient does not have a [redacted] account, the VCs will make every effort to provide guidance and offer assistance with the sign up process to patients.
4. The VCs will print the [redacted] token and other information with instructions on how to sign up if the patient decides to do his/her own activation at home.
5. Further assistance with enrollment will be provided by the Patient Portal Coordinator.

L. Enrollment Instructions:
1. At the health center:
   a. Provide patient the [redacted] Patient Portal Enrollment Form
   b. Ask if there is a **Care Manager** or **Dependent** to add. Dependents can be added to the back of the Enrollment form. A Patient Portal Proxy Access Form for Care Managers must be signed before adding a spouse/significant other as Care Manager
   c. In the E.H.R. pull up the guarantor; then go to **File**; scroll down to [redacted], **Enrollmen**t and then **Manage Enrollment**
   d. If patient is already enrolled all options under **Manage Enrollment** will show in bold. Plus, there is a tiny [redacted] icon that will show near the bottom right of the screen
   e. Add children under guarantor's account. Click **Add Dependent** and look child /children up by birth date and name. Add children; verify email; click print. You will click print for each person listed. The print box will then disappear. Two pages should print, the first page is the Token and the second is the Terms and Conditions.
   f. Each person should have a different numbered token. If for some reason all have the same Token, you can create a new one
   g. Spouse/significant other can be added by clicking **Add Care Manager.** Verify email**.** Click on **print** ensuring you have selected the correct printer
   h. Click **OK** to close out of E.H.R. account
   i. Bring up [redacted] click on the **Enrollment** button
   j. Enter the Token and valid email address. Sometimes an error message will pop up; make sure that the token and email have been input correctly. Click on the Terms and Conditions box. Note: It takes a few moments for the information to process
   k. Enter the user name; password; and security question. The password and security questions must be entered twice. Verify all information before submitting. If everything was input correctly, the Inbox will appear.

2. At the patient's home
    a. If the patient cannot stay for you to finish the enrollment in person, copy Enrollment Form and give the patient the original form along with the [redacted] token and terms and conditions. Use the copy to finish the enrollment.

M. Help Desk
1. Contact the Patient Portal Coordinator or the Information Technology Department

N. Related Documents: Patient Portal Clinician List