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SECTION: ADMINISTRATION

AREA: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

SUBJECT: PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION BREACH  
NOTIFICATION AND REPORTING

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### PURPOSE

This policy is established to comply with the breach notification and reporting requirements of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, Title XIII of Division A and Title IV of Division B of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), Pub. L. No. 111-5 (Feb. 17, 2009).

### SCOPE

UAMS Workforce.

### DEFINITIONS

**Breach** means unauthorized acquisition, access, use, or disclosure of protected health information which compromises the security or privacy of the protected health information, except where an unauthorized person to whom such information is disclosed would not reasonably have been able to retain such information. Exceptions

(i) any unintentional acquisition, access, or use of protected health information by a UAMS workforce member if—

(I) such acquisition, access, or use was made in good faith and within the course and scope of the employment or other professional relationship of such employee or individual, respectively, with the covered entity or business associate; and

(II) such information is not further acquired, accessed, used, or disclosed by any person; or

(ii) any inadvertent disclosure from a UAMS workforce member who is otherwise authorized to access protected health information at UAMS to another similarly situated individual at UAMS; and

(iii) any such information received as a result of such disclosure is not further acquired, accessed, used, or disclosed without authorization by any person.

**Disclosure** means the release, transfer, provision of access to, or divulging of information in any manner (verbally or in writing) by UAMS to persons who are not UAMS employees or students, or to any other person or entity *outside* of UAMS.

**Legal Representative** means the person authorized by law to act on behalf of the patient, such as the parent of a minor, a court-appointed guardian or a person appointed by the patient in a Power of Attorney document.

**Protected Health Information (PHI)** means information that is part of an individual's health information that identifies the individual or there is a reasonable basis to believe the information could be used to identify the individual, including demographic information, and that (i) relates to the past, present or future physical or mental health or condition of the individual; (ii) relates to the provision of health care services to the individual; or (iii) relates to the past, present, or future payment for the provision of health care services to an individual. This includes PHI which is recorded or transmitted in any form or medium (verbally, or in writing, or electronically). PHI excludes health information maintained in educational records covered by the federal Family Educational Rights Privacy Act and health information about UAMS employees maintained by UAMS in its role as an employer.

**Secretary** means the Secretary of Health and Human Services or any other officer or employee of HHS to whom the authority involved has been delegated.

**Use** means the sharing, employment, application, utilization, examination, or analysis *within* UAMS.

**UAMS Workforce** means for purposes of this Policy, physicians, employees, volunteers, trainees, and other persons whose conduct, in the performance of work for UAMS, is under the direct control of UAMS, whether or not they are paid by UAMS.

To access any other terms or definitions referenced in this policy:  
<http://hipaa.uams.edu/DEFINITIONS%20-%20HIPAA.pdf>

## **POLICY**

UAMS will provide written notification to individuals whose Protected Health Information (PHI) has been breached as required by law. UAMS will report the same breaches to the Secretary.

## **PROCEDURE**

### **A. Internal Reporting of Breaches**

- 1. Reporting to the UAMS HIPAA Office** All possible breaches of PHI must be reported to the UAMS HIPAA Office immediately upon discovery of the breach. Breaches may be reported by calling (501) 603-1379 or emailing [HIPAA@uams.edu](mailto:HIPAA@uams.edu).

Example 1 – a workforce member receives notice that a fax he sent to another doctor's office was inadvertently faxed to a florist, whose fax

number is one digit different from the doctor's fax number. The workforce member must notify the UAMS HIPAA Office immediately.

Example 2 – a nurse working in the hospital is searching for her patient in the electronic medical record system when she inadvertently clicks on another patient's record who has the same name as her patient. As soon as she realizes she is in the wrong patient's record, she deletes the record. The nurse does not need to notify the UAMS HIPAA Office, because this does not meet the definition of a breach.

Example 3 – one patient's discharge instructions are inadvertently given to another patient who is in the next exam room. The patient brings the discharge instructions back and informs the nurse that they are not his. The nurse must notify the UAMS HIPAA Office immediately.

- 2. Reporting to UAMS IT Security** All lost equipment possibly containing PHI must be reported to UAMS IT Security as soon as the loss is discovered, regardless of whether the equipment is encrypted or password protected. This includes but is not limited to all thumb drives, CDs or DVDs, computers, laptops, smartphones, and alphanumeric pagers. All reports to IT Security should be made by calling the IT Helpdesk at 686-8555.

Example – a physician realizes that his smartphone is missing, and the phone contains email that may have patient information in it. He is not sure where the phone is, but he knows he has not seen it in several hours. The physician should notify IT Security Immediately.

- 3. Reporting to Law Enforcement** All thefts and suspected thefts involving PHI must be reported to law enforcement immediately upon discovery of the loss.

Example 1 – the home of a research assistant who works from home is broken into and a locked file box containing patient records is stolen. The research assistant must contact law enforcement and the UAMS HIPAA Office immediately.

Example 2 – a traveling nurse's encrypted laptop containing PHI is stolen out of her car. The nurse must report the theft to law enforcement and UAMS IT Security immediately.

- 4. Retention of Documents** All documents possibly involved in the breach should be retained and turned over to the UAMS HIPAA Office. If the documents were impermissibly disclosed to a third party, that third party should be instructed to return the documents as soon as possible or await instruction from the UAMS HIPAA Office.

**B. Patient Notification** The UAMS HIPAA Office will coordinate and manage all patient notifications.

- 1. Notice to Patients** Written notice will be provided to individuals whose unsecured PHI has been breached, as soon as reasonably possibly, and in no case later than 60 calendar days after the breach is discovered. The notice will contain (a) a brief description of what happened; (b) a description of the type of unsecured PHI involved in the breach; (c) steps that impacted individuals should take to protect themselves from potential harm resulting from the breach; (d) a brief description of what the covered entity is doing to investigate the breach, mitigate the harm, and protect against future breaches; and (e) contact information for the individuals to use if they have questions or need additional information, including the toll-free UAMS HIPAA hotline number.
- 2. Notice to Personal Representatives** If the patient is deceased, the written notice will be provided to the next of kin or personal representative, if their address is known.
- 3. Substitute Notice** If the address is unknown for fewer than 10 individuals, then a substitute notice will be provided by other means reasonably calculated to reach the affected individual, such as by telephone. If the address is unknown for 10 or more individuals, then a substitute notice will be provided by either a conspicuous posting on the UAMS website for 90 days or a conspicuous publication in major print or broadcast media in the geographic areas where the individuals affected by the breach likely reside.
- 4. Urgent Notice** If the HIPAA Office determines that there is an imminent threat that the patient's information could be misused, urgent notice will be provided. Urgent notice may be provided via telephone or email, in addition to first class mail.
- 5. Delay of Notice** The HIPAA Office may delay providing notice if they have received a request from law enforcement to delay notification. Law enforcement should be asked to provide such a request in writing, and the request must be well documented. The decision to delay providing notice will be made by the HIPAA Campus Coordinator.
- 6. Notice to Media** If the breach involves (or is reasonably believed to have involved) more than 500 residents in a state or jurisdiction, prominent media outlets serving that state or jurisdiction will also be notified. The notice will be provided in the same time frame and must contain the same content as the notice to the affected individuals.

7. **Out of State Notice** When notice is required to patients who are residents of another state, the HIPAA Office will comply with all state breach notification requirements that are more stringent than the HIPAA requirements, if necessary.

C. **Breach Reporting** The UAMS HIPAA Office will notify the Secretary of all discovered breaches of unsecured PHI. If the breach involves 500 or more individuals, the Secretary will be provided notice at the same time as the affected individuals. For breaches that involve fewer than 500 individuals, a log of the breaches will be maintained and will be reported to the Secretary annually through the HHS website, no later than 60 days after the end of each calendar year.

D. **Review of Breaches** The UAMS HIPAA Office will review all breaches to determine what actions should be taken in response to the breach, including but not limited to disciplinary action, additional training, or changes to policies and procedures. In addition, all breaches will be reported to the UAMS Compliance Committee on a quarterly basis.

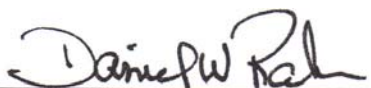
E. **Sanctions** Violation of this Policy will result in disciplinary action, in accordance with [Policy 4.4.02](#).

### **References**

Reporting of HIPAA Violations, [Administrative Guide 3.1.23](#)

Use and Disclosure of PHI and Medical Records, [Administrative Guide 3.1.28](#)

IT Security Incident Identification and Handling Policy, [Administrative Guide 7.3.01](#)

Signature:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: April 13, 2011