The Department of Family Medicine
Confidentiality Policy and Guidelines

I understand that as an employee of McMaster University, I must maintain the confidentiality of information to which I have access. This includes, but is not limited to information associated with students, study subjects, patients, visitors, staff and faculty. I understand that protection extends to information associated with students and study projects and also information, associated with patients and visitors, which may be accessed through the information systems of affiliated hospitals, departments and agencies. Confidential information is to be held in the strictest confidence whether means of access to such information is verbal, documented, computerized or otherwise obtained. Breach of confidence includes unauthorized access of confidential information, intentional or involuntary unauthorized release of confidential information and could lead to disciplinary action including termination of employment.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the following statements dealing with the confidentiality of information processed or acquired through my responsibilities as an employee of the Department of Family Medicine. In this document the Department of Family Medicine will refer to all locations and units within the department including the McMaster Family Practice, the Maternity Centre of Hamilton, the Stonechurch Family Health Centre, and all other units and teams therein.

I understand that:

All confidential and/or personal health information/academic records that I have access to or learn through my employment or affiliation with the Department of Family Medicine is confidential;

As a condition of my employment or affiliation with the Department of Family Medicine, I must comply with these policies and procedures, and my failure to comply may result in the termination of my employment or affiliation with the Department of Family Medicine and may also result in legal action being taken against me by the Department of Family Medicine/McMaster University and/or others.

I agree that I will not access, use or disclose any confidential and/or personal health information/academic records that I learn of or possess because of my affiliation with the Department of Family Medicine, unless it is necessary for me to do so in order to perform my job responsibilities. I also understand that under no circumstances may confidential and/or personal health information/academic records be communicated either within or outside of the Department of Family Medicine, except to other persons who are authorized by the Department of Family Medicine to receive such information.

I agree that I will not alter, destroy, copy or interfere with this information, except with authorization and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Department of Family Medicine.

I agree to keep any computer access codes (e.g. passwords) confidential and secure. I will protect physical access devices (e.g. keys and badges) and the confidentiality of any information being accessed.

I will not lend my access codes or devices to anyone, nor will I attempt to use those of others. I understand that access codes come with legal responsibilities and that I am accountable for all work done under these codes. If I have reason to believe that my access codes or devices have been compromised or stolen, I will immediately contact the Department of Family Medicine.

Confidentiality Guidelines

Access to Records:

- Only access the academic record/patient record if you are authorized and it is required to perform your job responsibilities (e.g. only those involved in the circle of care should access a patient's chart).

- Anytime you access a program that contains confidential academic or clinical information be sure to log off if you get interrupted, need to be away from the computer or are using another colleagues computer system.

- If you have remote access permission for online programs (e.g. Oscar) always be aware of your surroundings when accessing the program and log out if you get interrupted and/or need to leave the computer.

- If you are authorized to remove academic/clinical information from the office/clinic never store this information, either paper or electronically, in your private office/computer. Academic/clinical information must be completely deleted from your private computer, and paper information shredded or disposed of in a confidential manner.

Records Security:

- If working in a clinical environment always click on the 'lock' screen icon when leaving the exam room so the patient cannot access Oscar. Minimizing the screen is not sufficient. (Example - patient who very quickly got into Oscar, printed out a prescription, and left the clinic with it).

- Do not share program access (e.g. passwords) and be sure to log out of any programs containing confidential information if you need to be away from your work station.

- Do not leave confidential files or paperwork unattended on or around your workstation and be sure to place them in a secure area (e.g. locking filing cabinet) when they are not in use or not in your possession.

Verbal Communication:

- If confidential information needs to be shared verbally to perform your job responsibilities you must take steps to ensure that this information remains confidential (e.g. in the clinic you should lower your voice in the reception area or move to a quiet room).

I have read and understood the above policy and guidelines of the Department of Family Medicine.

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Name (please print)

_____ _____

Signature **Date**