Policy # FS-3

POLICY: CONFIDENTIALITY

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to assure all health care facilities, clients, families, patients and staff that all personal and medical information obtained about them by faculty, staff and students from the University of Pittsburgh at Titusville will be held in strict confidence. Specific personal and medical information will be accessed only by authorized individuals for the purpose of providing care for which they are responsible or for an approved curriculum educational activity.

JUSTIFICATION:


POLICY:

It is the policy of the University of Pittsburgh at Titusville nursing program to educate all faculty and students in the importance and methods for maintaining confidentiality of all personal and medical information that is revealed to them in the course of their clinical experiences with clients and families. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Strict confidentiality must be practiced in the maintenance of all records, conversations about and services to clients and their families.

2. Documents written by students in the normal course of their educational program (care plans, project papers, communication logs, etc.) must never reveal the name of a client or provide identifying information about a client.

3. Conversations with instructors or professional colleagues involving personal and medical information must be relevant to the client’s care and must take place in a private location. Hallways, elevators, and public cafeterias are particularly tempting places for conversations to occur, but they must be avoided to assure confidentiality.

4. Students and faculty must not discuss any patient, client, staff or their families’ information with their friends, relatives, spouses or other staff, patients or their families. In addition to not revealing names, students and faculty must not reveal any identifying formation about a client.
5. Students are not permitted to release written information about a client to anyone except their instructor and (1) it must be related to their educational purpose for being in the clinical facility, and (2) it must occur in such a way that the patient’s identify is protected. Although patients and families have a legal right to their own information, students must pass a request for written information from other than their instructor to an authorized person (e.g. Head nurse, Charge nurse, Clinical supervisor) at that facility.

6. Electronic/verbal reports to professional colleagues must be guarded for confidentiality. Papers, notes and cards with patient information must be properly destroyed (shredded) before leaving the clinical unit. Students are never permitted to take a client’s chart home or to their automobile.

7. Students and faculty must follow the confidentiality guidelines for the use of the computers in the facility. Among other mandates specific to each facility, one must never share a computer access code.

8. Students and faculty are accountable for knowing the contents of the HIPPA legislation and abiding by the confidentiality guidelines for clinical practice.

9. All students and faculty are accountable for reporting breeches in confidentiality to their immediate clinical supervisor (students must report to their instructor; instructors must report to the clinical supervisor of the facility).

10. Any person known to have violated a client’s right to confidentiality will be subject to disciplinary action. For students this action will include at minimum a formal learning contract as part of their clinical evaluation and at maximum could include failure of the course depending upon the degree of damage to the client or the number and severity of occurrences. For faculty this action will include at minimum a formal written reprimand and at maximum could include probation or termination depending upon the degree of damage to the client or the number and severity of occurrences.

11. Students and faculty must understand their continued personal and professional responsibility after they leave the clinical setting, after they complete the course, after they graduate from the program. Anyone who reveals confidential information after any clinical site visit may find themselves in a civil lawsuit at a personal level should they participate in what can legally be construed to be defamation of an individual’s character or invasion of privacy. Students and faculty must forever continue to maintain patient confidentiality.

12. This policy is reviewed with students in NUR 300: Foundations. A copy of the following Acknowledgement Form is kept in the nursing office.
Student and Faculty Acknowledgement

After reviewing this policy, I understand my responsibility to uphold confidentiality in the handling of all patient and client, personal and medical information. I understand the potential consequences of a breach of this policy.

Signature: _______________________________ Date: ________________

Print as signed: _______________________________

Note: The content of this policy is an adaptation from the Confidentiality Policy at Meadville Medical Center.