OBJECTIVES

- To support the accurate verification of patient identity to ensure that the patient receives the health service intended for them and thus avoid harmful incidents such as privacy breaches, allergic reactions, discharge of patients to the wrong families, medication errors, and wrong-person procedures.

- To meet Accreditation Canada’s Required Organizational Practices Standard for patient identification.

PRINCIPLES

Accurate patient identification reinforces the organization’s ongoing commitment to patient safety. Two (2) or more patient identifiers shall be used to confirm the patient’s identity prior to a health service being provided, to confirm that the correct patient receives the intended health service.

APPLICABILITY

Compliance with this document is required by all Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, Students, Volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers as necessary).

ELEMENTS

1. Patient Identification Process Requirements

   1.1 Prior to a health care provider directly providing a health service, the patient identification process shall consist of:
a) reviewing at least two (2) approved patient identifiers (see Section 2.1 of this Policy); and

b) matching and confirming the two (2) patient identifiers with the documentation outlining the health service to be provided.

1.2 **Confirmation of identity** shall be used to confirm the patient’s identity unless prevented by the patient’s clinical condition or other communication considerations such as language.

2. **Approved Patient Identifiers**

2.1 The health care provider shall confirm patient identity by using at least two (2) patient identifiers (see Section 1.1 of this Policy) from this approved list before the provision of a health service:

a) both the patient’s first and last name (considered one [1] identifier);

b) full date of birth (inclusive of day, month, and year);

c) **unique lifetime identifier (ULI)**;

d) **personal health number (PHN)**;

e) **medical record number (MRN)**;

f) patient identification barcode;

g) patient address if the address is provided by the patient;

**Note:** A room number is not considered the patient’s address.

h) a patient photograph if taken, managed, and stored in accordance with the requirements set out in the *Patient Identification – Registration Standard*;

i) facial recognition in accordance with Section 2.2 of this Policy; or

j) offender record correctional administration (ORCA) number.

2.2 Facial recognition may be used as a patient identifier only when:

a) the patient has previously been seen by the health care provider in the program area;

b) the patient is well known by the health care provider;

c) the patient is seen on a frequent and long-term basis in the program area;
d) the health care provider is confident they know the patient by facial recognition;

e) there are no circumstances that may lead to confusing a patient with another patient such as similar looking patients in the program area or a large number of patients cared for by the program area; and

f) a second patient identifier is confirmed from the patient in accordance with Section 1.1 and Section 2.1 of this Policy.

3. Emergency Situation

3.1 In an emergency situation when the patient’s identity cannot be immediately verified:

a) Alberta Health Services (AHS) shall not refuse or delay a health service; and

b) the patient shall be assigned a temporary unique identity number for use until the patient’s identity can be verified.

4. Auditing and Compliance

4.1 AHS programs should regularly audit compliance with this Policy and the Accreditation Canada Required Organizational Practice Standard using the Patient Identification Audit Tool.

DEFINITIONS

Confirmation of identity means that the person verbally states, spells and/or writes the identifiers (e.g., their name, date of birth) rather than confirming the identifiers as they may be read or said to the patient.

Continuing care setting means, for the purpose of this Policy, the following three settings in which patients with different needs receive a broad range of health and personal care, accommodation and hospitality services: home living; supportive living; and facility living.

Emergency situation means a circumstance which requires health care that is necessary to preserve life, to prevent serious physical or mental harm, or to alleviate severe pain.

Health care provider means any person who provides goods or services to a patient, inclusive of health care professionals, staff, students, volunteers and other persons acting on behalf of or in conjunction with Alberta Health Services.

Health service means a service that is provided to an individual for any of the following purposes: protecting, promoting or maintaining physical and mental health, preventing illness, diagnosing and treating illness, rehabilitation and caring for the health needs of the ill, disabled, injured or dying, but does not include a service excluded by the HIA regulations.
Medical record number (MRN) means a unique number assigned at a health care delivery site for an individual’s health service delivery records. The number is utilized for filing of paper records and unique identification of electronic records.

Patient means all persons, inclusive of residents and clients, who receive or have requested health care or services from Alberta Health Services and its health care providers. Patient also means, where applicable:

a) a co-decision-maker with the person; or
b) an alternate decision-maker on behalf of the person.

Personal health number (PHN) means the patient’s health care insurance number assigned to the patient by the provincial/territorial/federal government. (Health Information Act [Alberta])

Unique lifetime identifiers (ULI) means a unique and permanent number assigned to all persons who receive health services in Alberta. ULIs are assigned to all Alberta residents, residents of other provinces/territories or other countries.

REFERENCES

- Alberta Health Services Governance Documents:
  - Patient Identification - Registration Standard (#PS-06-01)
  - Consent to Treatment/Procedure(s) Policy (#PRR-01)
- Alberta Health Services Resources
  - Patient Identification Audit Tool
- Non-Alberta Health Services Documents:
  - Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act (Alberta)
  - Alberta Supplement. National Ambulatory Care Reporting System Implementation (Government of Alberta)
  - Provincial Registration Standards and Practices (Alberta Health / Alberta Health Services)
  - Required Organizational Practices Handbook (Accreditation Canada)

VERSION HISTORY

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<td>October 31, 2016</td>
<td>Revised, including change in Title from “Patient Identify Verification” to “Patient Identification”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 3, 2020</td>
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