HOUSTON METHODIST

MISSION
To provide high-quality, cost-effective health care that delivers the best value to the people we serve in a spiritual environment of caring in association with internationally recognized teaching and research.

VALUES

INTEGRITY
We are honest and ethical in all we say and do.

COMPASSION
We embrace the whole person and respond to emotional, ethical and spiritual concerns as well as physical needs.

ACCOUNTABILITY
We hold ourselves accountable for our actions.

RESPECT
We treat every individual as a person of worth, dignity and value.

EXCELLENCE
We strive to be the best at what we do and a model for others to emulate.
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NOTE: This handbook covers many situations that may arise during the course of your work or relationship with HM. There may be times when the answers to your questions are not apparent. Please see your HM supervisor or HM contract sponsor for guidance or explanation when needed. You may also speak with a representative of the Business Practices Office. Changes to existing policies are made on a regular basis. The most current version of the Houston Methodist Policies and Procedures are on the Houston Methodist intranet and take precedence if a matter is in conflict with this handbook. In the event that you do not have access to a computer or Houston Methodist systems, the policies and procedures may be obtained from your HM supervisor or contract sponsor.

BUSINESS PRACTICES: ETHICS & COMPLIANCE

BUSINESS PRACTICES PROGRAM

Houston Methodist is committed to building and maintaining a culture of integrity and ethics consistent with our core values: integrity, compassion, accountability, respect and excellence. The purpose of the Business Practices Program is to demonstrate the commitment of Houston Methodist to the highest standards of ethics and compliance with the law.

PROGRAM VISION: All actions taken in the name of Houston Methodist are consistent with strong moral values, high ethical standards, and the law.

The Business Practices Program helps Houston Methodist’s workforce make this vision a reality.

This vision is supported throughout Houston Methodist. The Audit and Compliance Committee of the Board of Directors and the Business Practices Committee, consisting of senior management and entity representatives, provides direction, guidance and oversight of this effort. The vice president, who is also the Business Practices Officer and Chief Audit Officer, leads the program. The Business Practices Officer reports functionally to the Board of Directors’ Audit and Compliance Committee and reports administratively to the Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer of Houston Methodist. The Business Practices Officer, working through the Entity Business Practices Officers, is responsible for the implementation of the Program.

Each Entity Business Practices Officer is responsible for directing Business Practices activities within their entity. The program website provides the name and contact information for each Entity Business Practices Officer.

The Board of Directors adopted the Business Practices Policy and the Business Practices Program Plan. All directors, officers, medical staff members, employees, and contractors of all Houston Methodist entities are expected to perform patient care activities, research and business operations in a manner consistent with the Program’s vision and Houston Methodist’s core values – I CARE.

1 Business Practices 01
VENDOR & CONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Complete Business Practices Program Training

The Business Practices Program provides training to employees, vendors and contractors. Training focuses on business practices, ethics, and legal and regulatory issues. The Business Practices Office staff is available to provide additional training upon request. Contact the Business Practices Office at 713.383.5124 to request an in-service.

Do the Right Thing! – Report Questionable Practices

If you learn about a situation that may violate the law or that may not be the right thing, you should report the situation. You should report a questionable practice for three reasons:

- Management wants to be aware of any practice or concern that is believed to violate Houston Methodist’s values or the law so it can be addressed.
- Reporting a questionable practice identifies issues that might not otherwise be raised and leads to resolution of these issues.
- Reporting questionable practices is part of each employee’s, vendor’s and contractor’s responsibility to make Houston Methodist better.

You should report a questionable practice to your HM supervisor, your HM contract sponsor, or other individual in your chain of command. If this is inappropriate or makes you uncomfortable, you may contact the following:

- HM Human Resources (for employment-related matters)
- Your HM entity’s Business Practices officer
- Houston Methodist Business Practices Officer at 713.383.5124
- Business Practices EthicsLine:
  - Call 1.866.ETHICS9, or
  - Visit HoustonMethodist.ethicspoint.com
- Department of Health and Human Services Offices of Inspector General
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission Office of Inspector General

Information about Business Practices EthicsLine and Follow-up

You do not have to give your name when you use the Business Practices EthicsLine. Incoming calls or web reports are not traced. A report of each concern is sent to the Houston Methodist Business Practices Office, which coordinates the investigation.

If you report a concern to the Business Practices EthicsLine, you will receive a tracking number you can use for follow-up with the Business Practices EthicsLine or the Business Practices Office (713.383.5124). For example, you may want to call back to provide additional information about the concern or inquire about the status of the

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2 Business Practices 07.
investigation. Additionally, the investigator may post requests for additional information to facilitate the investigation. These requests will remain in the file until the anonymous caller checks back with Business Practices or the Business Practices EthicsLine. You should call the Business Practices EthicsLine if you want to check on the status of an investigation without revealing your identity. While calls to the Business Practices Office are not traced or recorded, caller ID may reveal your identity.

You may use the Business Practices EthicsLine web reporting system to follow up on the status of an investigation, as well. Simply click the "Follow Up on a Reported Concern" link at tmhs.myethicsline.com.

All reports of questionable business practices are promptly investigated. Anyone who reports a questionable practice in good faith is protected from retaliation by Houston Methodist Business Practices Procedure BP07 and by federal and state laws.

Note: For assistance with end-of-life issues, follow your entity's process to request a biomedical ethics consultation.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

While all Houston Methodist employees, vendors and contractors are expected to actively participate in the Business Practices Program, managers are expected to set the example. In addition to those responsibilities listed above, management must:

- Create a culture within Houston Methodist that promotes the highest standards of ethics and legal compliance.
- Encourage employees, vendors and contractors to report questionable practices.
- Report questionable practices when they arise, ensuring that:
  - Individuals who make reports are not subject to retaliation;
  - Confidentiality is maintained to the extent possible if the reporting individual wishes to remain anonymous;
  - Accurate information is collected from the reporter;
  - Business Practices or another appropriate department is contacted for assistance; and
  - The reporter is informed that an investigation will take place.
- Continuously evaluate, revise and develop unit policies, procedures and practices for compliance with the law and Houston Methodist standards, and change or write them when necessary. Therefore, Houston Methodist reserves the right to change practices, modify job classifications, or institute any other language deemed necessary.
- Train employees, vendors and contractors to follow policies and procedures.
- Monitor employee, vendor and contractor practices and work outcomes to be sure policies and procedures are being followed.
- Ensure that employees, vendors and contractors complete appropriate Business Practices training.
- Complete the online Business Practices Program Course for Management.
- Be a role model – *Live Houston Methodist values in all of your work and do*
the right thing!

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

If you are a Houston Methodist contractor, your actions at work are expected to be in the best interests of Houston Methodist. Vendors are also expected to recognize and disclose conflicts of interest impacting or potentially impacting Houston Methodist. A conflict of interest exists when your private interests influence your actions at work in a way that is not in the best interests of Houston Methodist. A conflict of interest can also occur when your private interests appear to influence your actions at work in a way that is not in the best interests of Houston Methodist. Examples of “private interests” include personal or family relationships with competitors or vendors, employment outside of Houston Methodist, membership on some outside boards, and certain outside ownership interests.

Because Houston Methodist is dedicated to conducting business according to the highest ethical principles, conflicts of interest must be recognized, disclosed and managed to assure they cause no harm to Houston Methodist.

- Each vendor or contractor is responsible for disclosing potential conflicts of interest as they arise. You should disclose a potential conflict of interest to your HM supervisor, HM contract sponsor, appropriate management member, the Houston Methodist Business Practices Officer, or the chair or any decision-making body you serve.
- If requested, vendors and contractors are expected to participate in the annual conflict of interest survey.
- Individuals involved in research are subject to additional disclosure requirements outlined in Research Procedure (RE)14.

Contractors associated with Houston Methodist who have a conflict of interest must not vote on the conflicted matter but, following proper disclosure and prior approval, may participate in the decision-making process. Houston Methodist vendors and contractors are encouraged to contact their HM supervisor, contract sponsor, or the Business Practices Office for further information and guidance on potential conflicts of interest situations.

Business Contracts

Houston Methodist will not contract with organizations or individuals with interests that conflict with Houston Methodist’s. Potential conflicts of interest will be disclosed to the appropriate management person(s) for evaluation. Houston Methodist follows the

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3 Business Practices 08.
4 Business Practices 08.
5 Business Practices 08.
6 Business Practices 13; Business Practices 19; Anti-kickback Statute; Civil Monetary Penalties – Social Security Act § 1128A, see also 42 U.S.C. § 1320a-7a; Criminal Penalties – Social Security Act § 1128B, see also 42 U.S.C. § 1320a-7b; Exclusion – Social Security Act § 1128, see also 42 U.S.C. § 1320a-7; and Safe Harbors, 42 C.F.R. § 1001.952.
highest business standards in contracting with third parties.\textsuperscript{7} All contracts must be consistent with Houston Methodist policies and procedures. In contracting with third parties, Houston Methodist will comply with all disclosure rules, laws and regulations.

Houston Methodist maintains and adheres to internal standards relating to the purchasing process and payments to vendors.\textsuperscript{8} Questions related to these policies and procedures should be directed to Houston Methodist’s Supply Chain Management department or to the Business Practices Officer.

**Business Courtesies and Gifts**

Accepting gifts or gratuities may give the appearance of providing personal gain or showing favoritism to an individual and/or current or potential business partner. Vendors and contractors shall not accept or offer gifts intended to induce referral of patients or purchases, to influence any business or patient care decision, or to serve any other improper or unlawful purpose. With the exception of fundraising efforts supported by Houston Methodist Hospital Foundation, employees, vendors and contractors may not solicit or appear to solicit gifts of any value, either for themselves or for their departments or units.\textsuperscript{9}

Before accepting a gift or business courtesy from an individual or business partner or offering a business courtesy, consult *Policy and Procedure BP19*.

Vendors at Houston Methodist are expected to abide by the PhRMA Code, AdvaMed Code of Ethics, or other applicable professional ethics code with regard to their interactions with Houston Methodist and its employees. Vendors should also be respectful of limitations Houston Methodist sets for its employees with regard to accepting gifts and business courtesies, refraining from offering items or courtesies the vendor knows or should know Houston Methodist employees cannot accept. Questions pertaining to offering business courtesies at Houston Methodist should be directed to the Business Practices office.

**Accepting Gifts and Tips from Patients and Visitors**

Houston Methodist appreciates the generosity of its patients and visitors who offer gifts to Houston Methodist employees and contractors. However, accepting a gift from a patient or visitor may give an unfavorable appearance. For example, a visitor may offer a gift to you in hopes that you will give better care to their family than to other patients. Before you accept a gift from a patient or visitor, consult *Policy and Procedure BP19* or talk to your supervisor.

Employees and contractors may not accept tips from patients and visitors. A tip is a small amount of cash offered as a gratuity for a service.\textsuperscript{10}

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\textsuperscript{7} Financial 05.
\textsuperscript{8} Financial 02; Financial 09.
\textsuperscript{9} Business Practices 19.
\textsuperscript{10} Business Practices 19.
INTERACTIONS WITH PHYSICIANS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Business arrangements with physicians must be structured to ensure compliance with legal requirements. These arrangements must be in writing. The Department of Legal Services must approve these arrangements prior to implementation.\textsuperscript{11}

Houston Methodist does not pay or offer to pay anyone for patient referrals. Patient referrals and admissions are based on the patient’s medical needs and Houston Methodist’s ability to meet that need. Additionally, Houston Methodist does not accept payments for referrals. Employees, vendors and contractors may not ask for or receive anything of value in exchange for the referral of patients. When making a referral to another health care provider, Houston Methodist does not take into account the volume or value of referrals the provider has made or may make to Houston Methodist.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Clinical and biomedical research are part of Houston Methodist’s health care mission. Houston Methodist is committed to following high ethical standards in the conduct of research. Houston Methodist must review the impact of research projects on hospital operations and patient privacy. Employees, vendors and contractors, and others involved in research at Houston Methodist are responsible for following the law and Houston Methodist’s policies and procedures. Research misconduct will not be tolerated.

Research misconduct is defined as: falsifying data, making up data, or using data or ideas from another source without giving credit. Honest errors or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data are not considered research misconduct. For more information, consult Research Procedure RE15.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The following section contains direction and guidance on dealing with sensitive information such as business information, personnel records and medical and billing records. Additionally, this section outlines procedures regarding the accuracy, retention and disposal of records.

ANTITRUST LAWS

Houston Methodist is committed to following applicable federal and state antitrust laws. These laws are designed to promote fair competition. Talking about private Houston Methodist information with competitors (other health care institutions in the Houston area) may violate antitrust laws. You should not discuss how Houston Methodist sets its prices or salaries. You should not agree with a competitor to boycott a supplier. Additionally, you should not discuss Houston Methodist’s relationship with suppliers and payers, including usage rates, financial information and other contractual terms.

ACCURACY OF RECORDS, CHARTS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

We create many records, charts and files as part of our work. It is important for records to be correct and complete. Correct, complete records are needed to provide quality patient care, develop valid research data and comply with regulatory and legal requirements. Employees, vendors and contractors are responsible for ensuring that the records created or used are correct and complete.

RETENTION AND DISPOSAL OF RECORDS, CHARTS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

All Houston Methodist records must be kept as long as directed by the Records Retention Procedure and Schedule. If the Schedule does not list a certain type of record, contractors should ask their HM supervisor or the Business Practices Office how long the record should be kept. You should follow the Records Retention Procedure when destroying records.

INFORMATION SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Sensitive information about Houston Methodist’s strategies and operations is a valuable asset. Examples of sensitive Houston Methodist information include personnel data; patient lists and clinical information; quality assurance and care services activities; peer review actions; patient financial information; passwords; pricing and cost data; information pertaining to acquisitions, divestitures, affiliations and mergers; financial data; strategic plans; marketing strategies; supplier and subcontractor information; and research data. Vendors and contractors may have access to and use sensitive
information to perform their jobs. Keeping sensitive information private is a legal requirement and an important ethical obligation. If you have access to sensitive Houston Methodist information, Houston Methodist trusts that you will use this information appropriately. Sensitive information should not be shared with others without appropriate permission. You should not use sensitive Houston Methodist information you learn at your job except in the course of doing business with or on behalf of Houston Methodist. Vendors and contractors are not permitted to interfere with or uninstall security features deployed to Houston Methodist technology and devices.

Depending on your business relationship with Houston Methodist, you may be asked to sign a Confidentiality and Information Security Agreement. When you sign this Agreement, you agree to follow Houston Methodist’s policies and procedures to keep Houston Methodist information and information systems safe. Access to information systems and proprietary data is a privilege. Your access to Houston Methodist information systems and sensitive data can be taken away at any time.

**COMPUTER PASSWORDS**

Much of Houston Methodist information is kept on our computer systems. It is very important that these computer systems remain secure. One way we keep our computer systems secure is by safeguarding our computer passwords. You should keep your password secret and not share it with anyone. In addition, you should not allow your User ID to be used by another person. You should not write your password down or keep it in an accessible place. If you believe that your password is no longer secure, you should change it immediately and inform your HM supervisor.

**MEDICAL AND BILLING RECORDS**

Some of Houston Methodist’s most sensitive information is contained in medical and billing records. These types of records contain information about a patient’s medical condition, history, medication, family illnesses and financial information. It is important that these records are secure and kept in a safe location. Access to this type of information should be limited only to those vendors and contractors who need it to do their jobs. Vendors and contractors must never use or disclose sensitive information that violates the privacy rights of our patients. (Also see *Patient Care and Patient Rights: Right to Protected Health Information*.)

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13 Information Management 07.
14 Information Management 06.
WORKPLACE BEHAVIOR

CONTINGENT WORKERS (INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, AGENCY AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES)

Houston Methodist provides guidance to management on the appropriate use of contingent workers within Houston Methodist to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. All contract and temporary workers, including independent contractors, must be screened by HR before they are allowed to perform any services for Houston Methodist. Independent Contractors must be approved by Human Resources and have a contract in place through Legal Services before they will be approved to provide services for Houston Methodist.

COPYRIGHT

Unauthorized duplication, reproduction, distribution or alteration of copyrighted materials, without the express written consent of the owner, is a violation of federal copyright law and could result in civil and/or criminal liability. This includes computer programs, databases, and related documentation owned by the party with whom you are dealing or by another party.

Software is protected by copyright laws and may also be protected by patent, trade secret laws or as confidential information. The creation or loading of unauthorized copies of computer software or using personal software on Houston Methodist computer equipment is prohibited.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS USE

Houston Methodist policy regarding the use and monitoring of HM communications systems includes electronic and telephone communications systems, including but not limited to mail, email, courier services, telephone systems, answering machines, voice mail, fax machines, video equipment and tapes, tape records and recordings, pagers, cellular and smartphones, computer networks, and computer directories and files. Houston Methodist technology and/or equipment should be used primarily for business purposes only, and all communications and stored information transmitted, received, or contained in the Houston Methodist information systems are the property of Houston Methodist.

Communications using HM communication systems that may defame Houston Methodist, employees, customers, vendors, contractors, or competitors as well as offensive, harassing, vulgar, obscene or threatening communications are prohibited.  

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15 Human Resources 82.
16 Information Management 01.
Use of Social Networking Sites

Use of a social networking site while using Houston Methodist computing resources and while on work time should be restricted to activities that support Houston Methodist goals and objectives, and are in accordance with Houston Methodist’s values and policies. Posting information related to a Houston Methodist patient is strictly prohibited and may be a violation of HIPAA laws. Posting Houston Methodist confidential or proprietary information is also strictly prohibited. Vendors and contractors may not present personal opinions that in any way imply endorsement by Houston Methodist.17

PEOPLE OR ORGANIZATIONS EXCLUDED FROM MEDICARE, MEDICAID AND OTHER GOVERNMENT-FUNDED PROGRAMS

Federal and state governments can keep individuals and organizations from participating in government-funded programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and research funded by federal grants such as National Institutes of Health grants. Because Houston Methodist participates in these programs, Houston Methodist cannot employ or do business with individuals or organizations that have been excluded from federal health care programs.18

If you cannot participate in government-funded programs, you must tell your HM supervisor. Medical staff members, allied health professionals and vendors must tell the appropriate Houston Methodist personnel. If you have knowledge that a Houston Methodist employee, contractor or vendor doing business with Houston Methodist cannot participate in government-funded programs, you must report this information to the Business Practices Office for verification and resolution.

Houston Methodist screens all employees, physicians, vendors and contractors on a monthly and annual basis against the government exclusion lists.

VENDOR VISITS AND IDENTIFICATION

All vendors and their guests must register with Supply Chain Management’s credentialing service, submitting any required documents, which may vary by type of vendor. Vendors are required to check in/check out using a credentialing service kiosk at the Supply Chain office or other area designated by Houston Methodist and wear in plain view, a valid and specific temporary identification badge on each visit.

Vendors are required to schedule an appointment with the department/unit prior to the visit. Vendors are not permitted to visit a Houston Methodist entity without an approved appointment.

Vendors are not permitted to enter inventory areas, operating rooms, patient rooms/care areas or procedure rooms without permission from the unit/department supervisor, manager or director, and if applicable, the patient. Vendors are not permitted to engage, interact with, or in any way communicate with patients or patient family members and visitors without permission from the unit/department supervisor, manager or director, and if applicable, the patient.

17 Information Management 26.
Vendors should be familiar with Houston Methodist Supply Chain Management policies with regard to further expectations related to vendor presence at Houston Methodist entities, as failure to abide by these policies may result in the vendor being asked to immediately leave the premises, as well as temporary or permanent suspension of visitation privileges.\textsuperscript{19}
GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATIONS

Houston Methodist will cooperate with all government audits and investigations. Accurate information will be provided to external auditors and investigators. All members of the Houston Methodist workforce should immediately report any non-routing request related to Houston Methodist from a government agency to the Department of Legal Services or Business Practices. Government agents have the authority to approach individuals at any time and request any information. If you are approached by a government investigator while at work, you should immediately contact your HM supervisor, HM contract sponsor, and the Department of Legal Services or Business Practices. Before answering any questions, you have the legal right to consult with your supervisor, Legal Services or Business Practices. Foreign nationals working, learning or conducting other business or visitation to Houston Methodist on a visa sponsored by Houston Methodist should also immediately contact the HR-Immigration Department. Requests for immigration documentation should be provided in accordance with instructions provided during the individual’s visa orientation. If unsure, refer all investigators to HR-Immigration.

If you are approached by a government investigator regarding a Houston Methodist matter while on your personal time and away from Houston Methodist, you should ask the investigator for a subpoena or court order requiring you to talk with the investigator. If there is no subpoena or court order, you have certain rights regarding the interview. You have the right to:

- Ask the investigator for a business card or identification card
- Agree to be interviewed as requested and then end the interview at any time
- Agree to the interview, but only with a law present
- Agree to the interview, but only at work during normal business hours
- Take notes about the conversation
- Decline to be interviewed

If the investigator does present you with a subpoena, you should contact your HM supervisor, Department of Legal Services or Business Practices immediately.

If you agree to be interviewed, tell the investigator, “I am willing to cooperate with you, but I would like to make some calls first.” Then, contact the number and administrator on call listed here for your entity to help:

- Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital: 281.420.8600
- Houston Methodist Clear Lake Hospital: 281.333.5503
- Houston Methodist Continuing Care Hospital: 832.522.1000
- Houston Methodist Hospital: 713.790.2201
- Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital: 281.274.7000
- Houston Methodist West Hospital: 832.522.1000
- Houston Methodist Willowbrook Hospital: 737.477.1000
All Houston Methodist entities, call 713.790.2201 to reach the Business Practices officer on call. Houston Methodist-sponsored foreign nationals should call HR-Immigration at 832.667.6288 or 832.667.6240.

Houston Methodist requires members of its workforce to cooperate with government investigators. However, it is important that the legal rights of Houston Methodist and its workforce are respected. It may be difficult to figure out what information can legally be given to a government agent. Some information the government agent is seeking may be confidential and cannot be released by Houston Methodist or its workforce members unless certain requirements are met. It is important to talk to the contacts listed above to get directions on how to protect the privacy of patient, personnel, and other confidential information.
PATIENT CARE AND PATIENT RIGHTS

The following section contains information about patient care and certain basic rights of patients, in keeping with our mission, Houston Methodist recognizes and promotes certain basic rights of patients in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and accreditation standards.

PATIENT CARE

Houston Methodist is committed to providing quality health care in a spiritual environment of caring. We demonstrate this commitment by living Houston Methodist values in our daily work activities. Integrity, compassion, accountability, respect and excellence are found at all levels of the Houston Methodist organization. Living Houston Methodist values makes Houston Methodist a better place for patients and visitors.

Houston Methodist also demonstrates its commitment to providing quality health care by maintaining an active patient safety program and by hiring and granting medical staff privileges to properly licensed and credentialed providers.

ADMISSION, TRANSFER AND DISCHARGE

Respect is one of Houston Methodist’s core values. Houston Methodist treats every individual as a person of worth, dignity and value. Houston Methodist will not exclude or otherwise discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, disability, national origin, age, sex or religion from participation in, admission to, access to or treatment in any programs, activities or benefits. Houston Methodist strives to ensure that all patient transfers are done in a medically appropriate manner from physician to physician.

Houston Methodist will work with the patient and family to develop a discharge plan based on patient need for post-hospital care. Information and instructions will be given to the patient, family, and/or others who will be involved in home care. As needed, referrals to appropriate resources will be made.

Patients who need health care items or services following discharge from a Houston Methodist hospital have the right to choose the supplier or provider of the necessary item or service if they have not assigned this right to the payer. The patient’s freedom to choose will be respected.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

Emergency medical services will be provided to individuals who come to the hospital’s emergency department if the hospital has the ability and the room to care for this person. Houston Methodist will attempt to stabilize patients requiring emergency or lifesaving treatment regardless of the patient’s ability to pay. All individuals who have

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20 Business Practices 06.
21 Patient Care/Patient Safety 17; Patient Care/Patient Safety 29.
22 Patient Care/Patient Safety 29.
similar medical conditions will be treated consistently.23

END-OF-LIFE DECISIONS

Patients have the right to make advance directives regarding their health care. Patients will be given information describing their rights to request or refuse treatment, and to make advance directives. A patient’s advance directed will be honored to the extent permitted by law and within the capabilities of Houston Methodist, its employees, vendors, contractors and medical staff. The values or beliefs of employees, vendors, contractors or medical staff may cause concern or conflict with some aspect of patient care. The Biomedical Ethics Consultation Service assists with the evaluation and resolution of the conflict to ensure that the quality of patient care is not compromised.

PATIENT RIGHTS

Patients and their surrogate decision-makers have the right to be informed of their rights prior to receiving care, treatment and services, and to receive respectful and considerate care during their hospital stay. These rights apply to patients admitted to the hospital as well as patients receiving care, treatment or services in an outpatient department or off-campus setting of the hospital. In addition to specific rights, patients have certain responsibilities during their hospital stay. A description of the patient rights and responsibilities is included in System PCPS049 Patients’ Rights and Responsibilities and each hospital entity Patient Guide.

REPORTING OF SUSPECTED/ALLEGED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Any member of the workforce who suspects that a patient or patient’s family member is a victim of abuse or neglect should contact Adult Protective Services or Children’s Protective Services. Social workers are available at each hospital to help with the report and any subsequent investigation.

RESEARCH

Before participating in a research study, patients will be fully informed of other treatment options that may prove beneficial to them. All known potential risks, discomforts, expected benefits and alternatives must be explained to patients in a manner they can understand. All patients and staff have the right to refuse to participate in research without compromising any other services or functions. A patient’s treatment will not be affected by his or her refusal to participate in a research study.24

23 Patient Care/Patient Safety 02; EMTALA.
24 Research Procedure 12.
RIGHT TO PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

Patients have rights, with certain exceptions provided by law, with respect to the health information that is created about them at Houston Methodist. Houston Methodist’s Notice of Privacy Practices and Houston Methodist’s policies and procedures explain these rights. If you have questions or need information regarding your legal duties or Houston Methodist’s privacy practices, please contact the Business Practices Office.

Access

Within legal limits, the patient or surrogate decision-maker has a right to information contained in their medical record, including current medical records, in the form or format as requested (oral or written) and within a reasonable timeframe as agreed by the hospital and the individual requesting the medical record. The medical record may be requested in an electronic form or format, if available, or a readable hard copy form or format.25

Accounting of Disclosures

Patients have the right to request a list of disclosures that Houston Methodist has made of the patient’s health information with the exception of disclosures made for treatment, payment or health care operations, those authorized by the patient and certain other disclosures.

Amendment

Patients have the right to request an amendment to their health information if they believe that their health information is incorrect or incomplete. Houston Methodist may deny a patient’s request for amendment under certain circumstances, as provided by law.26

Complaint

Patients have the right to file a complaint with Houston Methodist or the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights if the patient believes that his or her health information privacy rights have been violated.27

Confidential Communications

Patients have the right to request that Houston Methodist communicates health information to them by an alternate means or to an alternate location other than their home address and telephone number. Requests for alternate communications should also be communicated by the patient to all of their health care providers, including their

25 Information Management 08.
26 Information Management 09.
27 Business Practices 06.
private physician. Houston Methodist will try to accommodate the patient’s request for alternate communications.\textsuperscript{28}

Notice of Privacy Practices

Patients have the right to receive a paper copy of the Notice of Privacy Practices.\textsuperscript{29} Houston Methodist may change the Notice of Privacy Practices, including adding provisions that apply to all health information that is currently maintained, as well as any information Houston Methodist receives in the future. The most current version of the notice will be posted at each Houston Methodist entity and placed on each Houston Methodist entity’s website.

Restrictions

Patients have the right to request that Houston Methodist restrict the use or disclosure of the patient’s health information for treatment, payment or health care operations.\textsuperscript{30} Houston Methodist is not required to agree to the patient’s request for certain restrictions.

\textsuperscript{28} Information Management 04.
\textsuperscript{29} Business Practices 17.
\textsuperscript{30} Information Management 07.
CODING, BILLING AND CHARGING FOR SERVICES

The following section contains information about billing, charging for supplies/services, payments, reimbursement and the submission of claims and cost reports.

APPROPRIATE CHARGING OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

Employees and contractors responsible for charging supplies, procedures and other services should follow Houston Methodist policies and procedures. These explain what is chargeable, which cost centers will receive revenue for charges, how to change prices, and how to resolve issues related to outpatient and institutional charging. Employees and contractors in this area should also regularly review coding practices and software edits to ensure compliance with government and private payer requirements. Institutional charges are for services provided to other hospitals and sponsors of research.

PATIENT DISCOUNTS

Houston Methodist offers discounts to certain patients who meet defined criteria, but all discounts must comply with a discount policy in order to assure compliance with federal and state law. Co-payments and deductibles should not be routinely waived.

CLINICAL DECISION-MAKING

One of Houston Methodist’s core values is integrity. Integrity means, “We are honest and ethical in all we say and do.” Integrity in clinical decision-making means that clinical decisions are based on patient health care needs. Clinical decisions are not based on how Houston Methodist pays or shares financial risk with its leaders, managers, clinical staff or licensed independent practitioners.

CORRECTION OF PAYMENT ERRORS

All patient and payer questions about Houston Methodist charges must be reviewed in a timely manner. If billing errors are found, employees or contractors should tell the billing office. The billing office will investigate, make corrections and/or refunds within 60 days of identification as defined and required by federal law.31

COST REPORTS

By law, Houston Methodist must prepare certain reports about costs and other information about its operations. These reports must be accurate and complete. Reports must reflect services rendered and supplies used. Reports must contain the information

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31 Financial 47.
required by law. All information on these reports must be properly classified, allocated to the correct cost centers, and supported by verifiable and auditable cost data.  

**REIMBURSEMENT RELATED TO RESEARCH**

Costs and charges associated with research will frequently be paid by a research sponsor rather than by Medicare, Medicaid or an insurance company. Individuals involved in accounting and charging of research-related procedures must carefully follow all policies and procedures. Contact the Houston Methodist Research Institute or the Business Practices Office for more information.

**SUBMISSION OF CLAIMS**

Houston Methodist submits claims for payment to the federal and state governments. Claims for payment can be made only for medically necessary services that were actually performed. Claims cannot contain false or misleading information. Diagnostic, procedural and billing codes are used to tell the payer what services were performed. The payer uses the codes to determine how much money to pay to Houston Methodist. Therefore, the codes assigned must accurately represent the services provided. Medical records are used as evidence to support the bills Houston Methodist submits. Making a false statement in a medical record used to support billing can be a crime. Medical record documentation must follow all regulatory and accreditation requirements and conform to professional standards.

Under the federal False Claims Act and Texas false claims laws, any person who knowingly submits, or causes someone else to submit, illegal claims for payment of government funds is subject to government fines and penalties. It is also a false claim to retain money that you should not have received. These fines and penalties can range from $11,000 to $22,000 per claim and be accompanied by penalties for triple the actual damages.

Private parties known as qui tam relators may bring actions on behalf of the government under the False Claims Act and Texas law. These qui tam relators may share in 15 percent to 30 percent of the proceeds from a false claims action or settlement.

You should report suspected illegal claim activity to the Houston Methodist Business Practices Officer (713.383.5124) or through Houston Methodist’s Business Practices EthicsLine (1.866.ETHICS9), or through web reporting at HoustonMethodist.ethicspoint.com. The Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General and Texas Health and Human Services Commission’s Office of Inspector General also accept reports of illegal claim activity.

Employees, vendors and contractors who report illegal claim activity in good faith are protected from retaliation by federal and state laws, and HM employees are also protected against retaliation under Procedure BP07. The False Claims Act provides for

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32 Financial 40.
33 Research Procedures 04; Research Procedures 16; Research Procedures 32.
34 Research Procedures 04; Research Procedures 16; Research Procedures 32.
certain remedies for retaliation against qui tam relators. These include reinstatement with comparable seniority, two times the amount of any back pay, interest on any back pay, and compensation for special damages sustained as a result of the discrimination, including litigation costs and reasonable attorneys’ fees.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT RECEIPT

This handbook has been prepared for your information in order to help answer some of your questions on topics relevant to vendors and contractors at Houston Methodist. This handbook is also a practical summary of how to conduct business operations and patient care activities in compliance with the law, and Houston Methodist values and organizational ethics. Please read it carefully. Upon receipt of this handbook, please sign the statement below and return as directed by your HM supervisor.

I, ____________________________, have received the handbook, and understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it. I also understand that failure to abide by the provisions in the handbook may lead to discontinuation of my professional engagement with Houston Methodist, or other enforcement action under applicable law.

I will familiarize myself with the contents of this handbook. By my signature below, I acknowledge, understand, accept and agree to comply with the information found in this handbook. I understand that this handbook is not intended to cover every situation that may arise during my engagement with Houston Methodist, but is a guide to the goals, policies, practices, and expectations of Houston Methodist.

I understand that I have a personal duty to bring all real or suspected violations of the law, and Houston Methodist’s values and organizational ethics to the attention of my HM supervisor, HM contract sponsor, my entity’s Business Practices officer, and/or the Business Practices Officer or to call the Business Practices EthicsLine. I understand that I cannot be punished or retaliated against for upholding the provisions in the handbook or for obeying the laws and regulations that apply to my job.

Houston Methodist reserves the right to modify or terminate any or all plans, rules, policies and procedures at any time and without notice. Houston Methodist policies and procedures are published on the Houston Methodist intranet. The website will contain the most current version of all new and existing policies and procedures. In the event of any conflict between hard copy and intranet procedures, the intranet procedure will take precedence.

__________________________________________
SIGNATURE

__________________________________________
DATE

__________________________________________
PRINTED NAME