Policy 4.79
Policy: Confidentiality

Responsible Official: VP for Human Resources
Administering Division/Department: Employee Relations
Effective Date: March 30, 2007
Last Revision Date: July 1, 2019

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Overview

It is the policy of Emory University that any confidential information (verbal, written, electronic, or accessed through a system) is considered privileged and strictly confidential. All confidential information including confidential research should be maintained in a manner which ensures its privacy and safety. Confidential information and/or patient information should not be discussed in open areas (elevators, cafeteria, etc.).

Emory safeguards the security and confidentiality of employee records and other types of confidential data. Employees who disclose confidential information observed or heard without proper authorization will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from Emory employment. The observance of confidentiality also applies to the disclosure of information regarded as confidential within a department.

Employees’ medical information is expected to be maintained in a strictly confidential manner, in a confidential file separate from any other departmental information.

All information, research or data of any type, whether created, retained, sent or received by an Emory employee, on any Emory computer, e-mail system or other electronic medium to which an employee has been provided access by Emory, is solely and exclusively the property of Emory. Employees have no ownership or other rights with respect to any such material or content unless specifically addressed in a signed and binding contract. If an employee has questions regarding intellectual property, data transfer or data use agreements, they should contact the Office of Technology Transfer at: (404) 727-2211.
Applicability

N/A

Policy Details

INFORMATION

For purposes of this policy, confidential information is defined as, but not limited to, patient records, financial records, human resources/payroll records, legal documents, research and clinical data. Any communication or reception of knowledge, such as facts, data or opinions, including numerical, graphic or narrative forms, whether oral or maintained in any medium, including computerized database, paper, microfilm or magnetic tape, should be protected because of its sensitivity. The release of this information may have negative financial, competitive, productivity loss, legal or other non-beneficial impacts on Emory.

PROCEDURES

Authorized individuals (including, but not limited to, all employees and non-employees) have access to confidential information for the purposes of employee matters and/or specific job-related duties. Authorized individuals who may have access to confidential information include, but are not limited to, new hires, current staff and principals, students, physicians, contractors, volunteers, vendors, faculty, and other university representatives. Individuals must obtain prior approval by the appropriate department directors or designee and/or committee prior to the release of any information deemed confidential.

Confidential information should not be accessed by, or discussed with, anyone except authorized individuals with a need to know. All requests for information about the employee should be forwarded to the authorized department.

Access controls should be in place (logon IDs and passwords) to protect confidential computer information as defined by Information Technology Division.

Upon separation from employment at Emory University all employees must agree in writing to return all Emory data and physical property and to not disclose any confidential information to any person or entity outside Emory without the prior written permission of a duly authorized officer of Emory or disclose information claimed by third parties to be confidential or proprietary and which Emory has agreed to keep confidential. Confidential information does not include information which Emory has voluntarily disclosed to the public or which has otherwise legally entered the public domain. This agreement should be signed and returned to your supervisor or HR Representative and is required to be eligible for rehire at Emory. See Property Return and Confidentiality Agreement at http://hr.emory.edu/agreement.

Current or former employees, physicians, contractors, students or other agents who as either information providers or information users intentionally and without proper authorization (1) access, retain or disclose confidential Emory information or (2) modify or destroy Emory information are in direct violation of Emory’s policy. Such violations may lead to disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal from Emory. Under certain circumstances, such violations may give rise to civil and/or criminal liability.
Definitions

N/A

Related Links

• Current Version of This Policy: http://policies.emory.edu/4.79

Contact Information

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Revision History

• Version Published on: July 1, 2019
• Version Published on: June 21, 2007