

Security of Children in Hospital - Guidelines for Protocol Development

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Functional Sub group Clinical/ Patient Services - Baby and child

Summary Requires health organisations to have guidelines in place to cover the security of hospitals and children.

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Applies to Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations, NSW Dept of Health, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres, Public Hospitals

Distributed to Public Health System, NSW Department of Health, Public Hospitals, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres

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Director-General

Compliance with this policy directive is mandatory.

CIRCULAR

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GUIDELINES FOR PROTOCOL DEVELOPMENT FOR THE SECURITY OF CHILDREN IN HOSPITAL

The security of children in Hospital is the responsibility of the particular Area Health Service and/or Hospitals. The New South Wales Health Department requires that guidelines be in place in each organisation to cover the security of hospitalised children. The issue of confidentiality should be respected in all procedures.

Security particularly relates to:

1. Temporary removal and/or discharge of children from a Ward/Hospital

Examples of protocol for the temporary removal and/or discharge of children from a Ward/ Hospital and a *pro forma* for Ward Release are attached to assist Hospitals in the development of procedures appropriate for their needs. Procedures should ensure:

- C *Security* through identification of custodial parents/legal guardians; authorisation for removal of children from the Ward and/or discharge and retention of consent forms as part of the clinical record.
- C *Minimum staffing levels.*
- C *Notification* of security incidents to Management and where appropriate to the Child Protection Authorities.
- C *Quality assurance* including access of staff to printed copies of the guidelines, monitoring and periodic review of the procedures.

2. Care for Children under Orders in a Ward/Hospital.

An Assumption Order issued by a Court places a child under the care of the Department of Community Services.

At the admission of a child under Orders the person designated as the Hospital's responsible staff member for such admissions needs to clarify the specific conditions of that Order, the District Centre of the Department of Community Services responsible for the child, and the name/phone contact of the responsible Officer.

This information should be communicated to the attending Medical Officer, Nurse Unit Manager, staff members involved in the child's care and the security department/officer.

Distributed in accordance with circular list(s):

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Security protocols for the removal and/or discharge from a Ward/Hospital of all hospitalised children should also be applied to children under Orders. As well special procedures may be needed **with reference to the degree of risk in the particular case.** Procedures should ensure:

- C *Security and surveillance* through identification of custodial parents/legal guardians, authorisation for removal of children from the Ward and/or discharge with reference to those people who have the legal right to remove the child and to the degree of risk of other persons removing or harming the child, and the retention in the clinical records of documentation such as Family Court Orders, Children's Court Orders or Bail conditions.
- C *Minimum staffing levels.*
- C *Notification* of security incidents to Management and to the responsible Officer of the District Centre of the Department of Community Services. **There is an emergency 24 hours service available through phone (02) 9360 7200 if the District Centre cannot be contacted.**
- C *Quality assurance* including access of staff to the relevant conditions of the Order, monitoring and periodic review of the procedures.

John Wyn Owen
Director-General

**PROTOCOL
EXAMPLE 1:**

AUTHORITY TO TAKE CHILDREN FROM WARD/DISCHARGE*

Hospital inpatients may only be discharged, granted overnight leave or temporary leave of absence in the custody of his/her parent or recognised guardian.

Parents and legal guardians are encouraged to be with their children and are generally known to ward staff.

Identification must be shown if the parent/legal guardian is unknown to medical/nursing staff.

Grandparents/relatives, other than parents, must have prearranged or written permission from the parents/guardians to remove the patient from the Hospital.

In other cases a friend or relative may act as surrogate. In this case it is likely that the nominated surrogate will be known to ward staff, having accompanied the child and parents at the time of admission. They may take the child from the ward with the written consent of the parent. This written consent is to be fixed to the clinical notes and is to be deemed as part of the clinical notes.

When the surrogate is not known to the ward staff, both written consent and some formal identification will be required, such as driver's licence, passport, health card etc.

A specimen signature of parent/legal guardian(s) must be obtained upon admission of the patient.

Occasionally parents and guardians may not be available. In cases when the Hospital may arrange for a volunteer to act as a surrogate or ward grandparent, the volunteers are regarded as staff.

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**PROTOCOL
EXAMPLE 2:**

**PROTOCOL
AUTHORITY TO TAKE A CHILD FROM THE WARD***

Discharge Procedures

Parents (or Guardians) confirm with ward nursing staff that the baby or child may go home, or ward nursing staff inform them about the discharge.

Parents go to the Patients Office to complete discharge procedures and receive a slip confirming that discharge procedures have been completed.

The parent then signs the back of the admission form to say they are taking their child. If anyone other than the parent wishes to take the patient, they need to have a signed letter from the parent authorising the discharge and this is attached to the admission form.

The child is identified by the nurse and the parent and the insert bearing the name from the identification bracelet removed and attached to the medical record follow-up notes.

Taking Child From Ward

When a custodial parent or person other than staff takes a child from the ward, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. Parents and guardians are encouraged to be with their children and are generally known to ward staff. Only parents and legal guardians may take children from the ward for walks, etc.
2. Occasionally parents and guardians may not be available. In some cases the Hospital may arrange for a volunteer to act as a Surrogate or ward grandparent and are regarded as staff, but in other cases a friend or relative may act as surrogate. In this case, it is likely that the nominated surrogate will be known to ward staff, having accompanied the child and parents at the time of admission. They may take the child from the ward with the written consent of the parents. This written consent is to be fixed to the clinical notes and is to be deemed as part of the clinical notes.

When the surrogate is not known to the ward staff, both written consent and some formal identification will be required, such as drivers licence, passport, health card, etc.

* **Included with permission of Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children.**

WARD RELEASE FORM*

TO: (insert Name of Hospital)

I,of

hereby acknowledge, agree and declare as follows:

- 1. I am aware that , a patient admitted to the Hospital, desires to be granted leave from the Hospital for the period from to..... , and that during such period the Hospital will be unable to give or supervise the patient's treatment or to take care of him/her or to attend to his/her wellbeing.
- 2. I desire that the patient be granted leave for the said period.
- 3. That in consideration of the Hospital permitting the patient to be released on such leave, in accordance with my wishes, I agree to and do accept full responsibility for the care of and the wellbeing of the patient during such period and for any deterioration in his/her condition or health or wellbeing and for any lack of medical or Hospital treatment or attention during or arising in and about such period and I release, discharge and absolve the Hospital from any liability or responsibility arising out of or in respect to the same.
- 4. I agree to exercise my best endeavours to ensure that the patient takes all such steps and precautions as may be necessary for his/her wellbeing or good health, and in particular that he/she observes and follows the advice of his/her medical advisors and takes such treatment and medicines as may be prescribed or advised by them in accordance with such prescription or advice, during such period.
- 5. That I have read this document, and that its contents have been explained to me and that I understand its meaning and effect.

DATED this..... day of..... 19.....

Signed

Witness
(Address and Relationship patient)

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