



COVID-19 Update

Date: Thursday, April 23, 2020
To: Everyone at HHS
From: Gillian Kafka, Legal Counsel and Chief Privacy Officer
Subject: **Patient Privacy – COVID-19 Patients**

Outside of mandatory Public Health reporting requirements, Hamilton Health Sciences maintains its obligation to protect privacy in these unprecedented times. As such, **patient information may not be accessed or shared for any non-HHS authorized purpose.**

Patient trust is imperative at this critical time. Due to the heightened risk to patients tested or treated for COVID-19, the HHS Privacy Office will be auditing all COVID-19 patient charts on an ongoing basis. Staff access will be reviewed for appropriateness, such as circle of care. This is a reminder that there can be serious consequences for an intentional breach of privacy, such as:

- Report to Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario
- Report to professional college
- Fines
- Discipline, which may also include termination

We recognize that these are trying times and you may be concerned about a patient's status, but there is no change to privacy guidelines that permit access to a patient's record not in your circle of care. Please continue to respect our patients' privacy during this time.

Please continue to report suspected privacy violations immediately and contact the Privacy Office at privacy@hhsc.ca if you have any questions or concerns.

Gillian Kafka