

**TITLE:** Use and/or Disclosure of Protected Health Information for Disaster Relief Purposes

**Policy Number:** AM-HP-002

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:**

To provide policy and procedure for the use and/or disclosure of PHI for disaster relief purposes.

**POLICY:**

Neighbor To Family may use and/or disclose Protected Health Information (PHI) during disasters and disaster relief to government agencies (federal, state, local, or tribal) engaged in disaster relief activities, as well as to private disaster relief or disaster assistance organizations (for example, emergency medical personnel, the American Red Cross) coordinating such efforts to allow them to carry out their responsibilities. Neighbor To Family will make every effort to secure authorization for release of PHI in the event of a disaster. Disclosures will be documented and the accounting maintained at each program site.

**PROCEDURE:**

Definitions:

Disaster: An unexpected natural or man-made catastrophe of substantial extent causing significant physical damage or destruction, loss of life, or sometimes permanent change to the natural environment.

The following procedures shall be used when using and/or disclosing PHI for disaster relief purposes:

1. Notification: Neighbor To Family may use and/or disclose PHI for the purpose of notification (or assisting in the notification, identification, or location) of a family member, personal representative of the client, or another person responsible for the care of the client, of the client's location, general condition, or death;

2. Neighbor To Family may share PHI with a public or private agency or organization for disaster relief purposes. Even if the client objects, PHI may still be shared, if necessary, under emergency circumstances;
3. Uses and/or Disclosures When Client is Present: If the client is present or available and can disclose medical information, Neighbor To Family may use and/or disclose PHI if:
  - a. Client authorization is obtained; or
  - b. Client was provided with the opportunity to object to the disclosure, and the client did not express an objection;
4. Limited Uses and/or Disclosures When the Client is Not Present: When the client is not present or when opportunity to agree or object is not possible due to the client's incapacity or emergency condition, a Neighbor To Family employee may use and/or disclose client PHI in compliance with the minimum necessary standard that is relevant to the government agency's or disaster relief organization's involvement with the client's health care;
5. Verification of Identity Prior to Disclosure of Protected Health Information: Verify the identity of government agency personnel (federal, state, local, or tribal) engaged in disaster relief activities, as well as private disaster relief or disaster assistance organizations personnel (for example, emergency medical personnel, the American Red Cross) by photo identification. Identity verification should be completed prior to disclosing PHI of a client; and
6. Accounting of Disclosures for Disaster Relief: All disclosures will be documented and maintained at each program site on the Accounting of Disclosures of Protected Health Information form.