



Policy Name: Confidentiality Policy and Student Agreement

Originating/Responsible Department: School of Nursing

Approval Authority: Megan Manning

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Contact: Megan Manning

School of Nursing Confidentiality Policy and Student Agreement

1. Purpose and Scope

Nurses have ethical and legal responsibilities to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of those they provide care for (College of Nurses of Ontario). As part of their learning nursing students at Carleton University will be entrusted with sensitive personal, health, academic, and institutional information throughout their education. This policy outlines expectations and responsibilities for safeguarding confidentiality in academic, clinical, simulation, and digital contexts.

This policy applies to all nursing students from their initial admission into the program until graduation.

2. Definitions

Clinical Partner: Any organization or institution providing clinical practicum or placements for Carleton University nursing students.

Clinical: The setting where the nursing students participate in their clinical practicum.

School of Nursing (SON) faculty: employees of Carleton University working within the SON (includes members such as faculty, staff, preceptors, facilitators).

Student Support Plan: A document co-created between SON faculty and the student to identify learning opportunities, strategies, and resources to support the student in meeting clinical course requirements.

Students: Individuals enrolled in any nursing program at Carleton University.

The University: Carleton University.

Academic settings: Refers to settings such as; classroom, simulation center, written assignments, discussions.

Digital communications: Refers to communication tools used by the SON including, but not limited to, emails, websites, social media, cloud storage, electronic health records, learning management systems, student information systems, online networks, and event calendars.

Carleton University School of Nursing representative: Includes interactions where students are identified as representatives of Carleton University School of Nursing.

3. Foundational Principle

All nursing students are expected to:

- Comply with provincial and federal privacy legislation, including Ontario's *Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA)* or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), when applicable;
- Uphold the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) standards and the Canadian Nurses Association Code of Ethics and the nurse education standards set by the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN);
- Follow Carleton University's Student Code of Conduct, Senate Academic Integrity policy and all affiliated clinical partners' confidentiality policies.

4. Confidentiality Obligations

The following list describes confidentiality obligations that students must adhere to. It is important to note that this list is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive.

a. Patient/Client Information

- Students shall not access, collect, copy, or share personal health information except as required for educational and clinical learning and under direction from SON Faculty.
- Students may only disclose patient/client information to members of the healthcare team directly involved in care, and/or authorized by the clinical placement staff circle of care.
- Students must never identify patients or clients by name or include identifiable details in assignments, presentations, or discussions (use initials instead).
- Students are to agree to keep any computer access codes (e.g. passwords) confidential and secure.

- Students shall not lend access codes or devices to anyone, nor will they attempt to use those of others. Students understand that access codes come with legal responsibilities and that they are accountable for all work performed under these codes. If a student has reason to believe that their access codes or devices have been compromised or stolen, they will immediately notify the SON faculty.
- If the student is unclear on acceptable use, the student is to be self-directed in seeking clarification. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with this policy and to uphold the principles set out herein.

b. Academic and Institutional Information

- Maintain strict confidentiality regarding classmates, faculty, and staff.
- Respect the privacy of student records, grades, accommodations, and health information, and/or digitally encrypted and deleted.

c. Written Work and Assignments

- Ensure there are no patient/client personal identifiers included in academic submissions.
- Securely store and dispose appropriately (in shredder box) of any notes or materials containing personal or health information.

d. Social Media and Public Discussion

- Students shall not share any information about patients, clients, peers, faculty, or clinical sites on social media or public forums.
- Avoid engaging in online discussions that could be construed as unprofessional or as breaching confidentiality.

e. Site-Specific Policies

- Familiarize themselves with and comply with confidentiality expectations at every clinical placement site.
- Students are expected to sign and adhere to additional confidentiality agreements as required by partner organizations/facilities, throughout the nursing program.

5. Breach of Confidentiality

Breaches of confidentiality may include, but are not limited to:

- Sharing personal health information outside the circle of care
- individuals with the university and/or partner agency;
- Discussing patient/client information in public areas;
- Posting clinical experiences on social media;
- Accessing records without authorization.

Consequences in breach confidentiality may include, but are not limited to:

- Immediate removal from a clinical placement;
- Formal disciplinary action under Carleton University's policies;

- Possible reporting to the College of Nurses of Ontario;
- In serious cases, dismissal from the program.

6. Reporting Concerns

A ‘privacy breach’ is an incident involving the unauthorized disclosure of Personal Information in the custody or control of Carleton. This would include Personal Information being lost, stolen, or accessed by unauthorized persons. The “Privacy Breach Incident Plan” outlines the best practices for responding to a privacy breach in four simple steps. The “Privacy Breach Reporting Form” must be filled out whenever a privacy breach has been identified. The details you provide on this form will enable Carleton’s Privacy Officer to produce a formal report, should one be required, for Ontario’s Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Once the form is completed, it must be sent back to the Privacy Office (details are provided on the form).

Students must immediately report any suspected or actual breach of confidentiality to:

- **SON faculty** (for example, an email/personal note).
- **Clinical site supervisor/manager and preceptor**, if required by agency partner policy.

7. Confidentiality Agreement

See Appendix A.

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the SoN and updated as required to reflect changes in legislation, professional standards, and clinical partner agreements.

Appendix A

Acknowledgment of Understanding and Commitment to Carleton University's School of Nursing Confidentiality Policy and Student Agreement

I, _____ (print name), acknowledge that I have read and understand the Carleton University School of Nursing Confidentiality Policy.

I agree to:

- Uphold all confidentiality obligations in academic, clinical, simulation, and professional settings.
- Comply with all relevant privacy legislation, professional standards, and institutional policies.
- Protect the personal and health information of patients, clients, peers, faculty, and staff.
- Report any suspected or actual breaches of confidentiality immediately.
- I agree that I will not access, use or disclose any confidential and/or personal health information that I learn of or possess because of my affiliation with agency partners.
- I agree that I will not alter, destroy, copy or interfere with confidential data and/or personal health information, except with authorization and in accordance with the SON's or agency partners policies and procedures.
- I agree to keep any computer access codes (e.g. passwords) confidential and secure. I will protect physical access devices (e.g. keys and identification badges) and the confidentiality of any information being accessed.
- I will not lend my access codes or devices to anyone, nor will I attempt to use those of others. I understand that access codes come with legal responsibilities and that I am accountable for all work performed under these codes. If I have reason to believe that my access codes or devices have been compromised or stolen, I will immediately notify security.

I understand that breaches of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the Nursing program, and the University.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

References

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