

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR NORTHEAST LOUISIANA PHYSICIAN HOSPITAL ORGANIZATION

Northeast Louisiana Physician Hospital Organization (NLPHO) is committed to conducting business in an ethical and honest manner and within the bounds of the law. This Code of Conduct is intended to provide our employees and any other agents of NLPHO with guidelines for conducting business in a manner which fulfills that commitment.

It is our duty to uphold the Code of Conduct and to report any violations of this Code. Alleged violations will be investigated by appropriate personnel and disciplinary action for violations shall be enforced through the disciplinary policies and procedures of the Compliance Plan. Disciplinary actions will be determined on a case-by-case basis and may include dismissal from employment.

The President of NLPHO has a special duty to adhere to the principles set forth in the Code of Conduct. In addition to following the Code, this person must also support other members in the organization in their adherence to the Code, he/she must recognize and detect violations of the Code, and he/she must enforce the standards set forth herein.

COMPLY WITH THE LAW

NLPHO is subject to numerous local, state, and Federal laws pertaining to all aspects of operation. NLPHO employees are required to understand and abide by those laws which are applicable to them in the performance of their jobs.

PROTECT CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

NLPHO is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary information in accordance with applicable legal and ethical standards. Consistent with HIPAA, we do not disclose or discuss patient information with others unless it is necessary in an effort to assist NLPHO providers to be paid or otherwise required by law.

FOLLOW ALL ANTITRUST REGULATIONS

A number of activities engaged in by NLPHO are subject to state and Federal antitrust laws. Generally, these laws prohibit agreements or actions that may illegally restrain trade or reduce competition. Examples of some of these activities that violate these laws include, but are not limited to, agreements among competitors to fix or stabilize prices and inappropriate exclusive dealings with contracted payors. Sharing information with a competitor, such as pricing may also violate anti-trust laws.

AVOID CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

It is the policy of NLPHO to prohibit its employees and other associates from engaging in any activity, practice, or act which conflicts with, or appears to conflict with, its interests. Therefore, Employees, Participating Providers, Board members, and other individuals must disclose to the Compliance Officer any potential conflict of interest they or their immediate family have in any firm which does business with NLPHO.

NOT TOLERATE HARASSMENT OR DISCRIMINATION

It is NLPHO's policy not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, qualified disability, sexual orientation, or gender in providing services nor in relation to employment practices. Furthermore, NLPHO prohibits harassment or discrimination of its employees in any form by supervisors, coworkers, customers, or vendors.

PROTECT ACCESS TO INFORMATION SYSTEMS

NLPHO is committed to protecting all aspects of its information systems. All employees and other associates with access NLPHO's computerized information system shall sign and abide by NLPHO's information security policies, including the protection of confidential passwords and other access information

KEEP ACCURATE AND COMPLETE RECORDS

It is essential that NLPHO report accurate information to governmental entities and other third parties. In order to meet this obligation, it is equally essential that all employees accurately and clearly report the relevant facts or the true nature of a transaction. No employee should knowingly or with reckless disregard for the truth make any false or misleading statement on any form or to another employee or auditor for NLPHO. All audit information and forms related to NLPHO clinical initiative efforts will be accurate and complete. Credentialing and re-credentialing forms will be maintained in accordance with standards set by NCQA and contracted payors who have delegated credentialing to NLPHO. All financial reports, accounting records, expense accounts and other documents will be prepared completely and accurately representing the relevant facts and true nature of all NLPHO business transactions. We will maintain and protect the property and assets of NLPHO, including intellectual property and proprietary information, equipment, supplies, and funds. All records, including business documents will be retained in accordance with state and Federal law.

EXAMPLES

1. Initial Provider Appointment, Credentialing and Re-credentialing of Network Providers:
 - Applications that are not processed in the same manner;
 - Lack of maintaining strict confidentiality of provider information obtained from the NPDB, LA State Board of Medical Examiners as well as other entities through authorized verification sources;
 - Discrimination in the provider application process;
 - Adverse recommendation by the Credentials Committee without specific reference to the credentials file; and
 - Failure to exercise peer review action when appropriate under the Fair Hearing Plan.
2. Financial Internal Controls:
 - Duties of handling cash receipts/cash disbursements are not separated among staff;
 - No review of bank reconciliation, daily cash receipts, or cash disbursement records;
 - No processing routine to substantiate accuracy of disbursements for goods/services or comparison of deposits to cash receipts; and
 - Cash receipts are not recorded properly to provider's accounts.
3. Messenger Model Guidelines:
 - Manipulation of minimum fee reimbursement to network providers;
 - Show favoritism to one contracted payor over another; and
 - Refusal to messenger payor requested provider reimbursement to network providers.
4. Network Needs Assessment:
 - Providers denied access to network/contracted payors without analysis of healthcare services and needs of contracted payors.
5. Medical Chart Audit Review:
 - Provider specialties and service areas audited dictated by NLPHO;
 - Lack of confidentiality regarding the patient's charts, as well as results of audit;
 - Unfair process to solicit physician participation in medical chart review; and
 - Lack of education provided to participants regarding audit findings and results.

6. Privacy and Security of Protected Health Information:

- Lack of reasonable safeguards against misuse of PHI; and
- Lack of employee education regarding security and confidentiality of PHI.

PROVIDE A SAFE WORKPLACE

It is the policy of NLPHO to comply with all applicable state and Federal laws to provide a safe work environment. NLPHO is committed to training the employees to carry out their work in a manner that is safe for them and their co-workers.

REPORTING ETHICS AND COMPLIANCE CONCERNS

All NLPHO employees, members of the governing body, and FDRs are to report compliance concerns and suspected or actual violations related to the Medicare program to the Health Plan Sponsor. NLPHO participates in several federal programs with specific fraud, waste, and abuse requirements.

Definition of Fraud, Waste and Abuse (FWA):

- Fraud: Intentional misuse of information in order to persuade another to part with something of value or to surrender a legal right. It could Be an act of planned deception or misrepresentation.
- Waste: To use, consume, spend, or expend thoughtlessly or carelessly.
- Abuse: Providing information or documentation for a health care claim in a manner that improperly uses program resources for personal gain or benefit, yet without enough evidence to prove criminal intent.
- Medicare Fraud, Waste, and Abuse laws include the following:
 - Federal False Claims Act (FCA)
 - Anti-Kickback Status (AKS)
 - Physician Referral Law (Stark Law)
 - Social Security Act
 - United States Criminal Code

How to report actual and potential noncompliance and Fraud, Waste, and Abuse if it impacts the Medicare program to the Health Plan Sponsor:

1. Tell your supervisor.
2. Contact Health Plan Sponsor via email.
3. Ethics Hotline.

NLPHO enforces a zero-tolerance policy for retaliation or retribution against anyone who reports suspected misconduct.

CONCLUSION

It is expected that each one of us will follow NLPHO policies and the Code of Conduct and report violations when they occur.