



How to Build Effective Privacy Policies & Procedures

An
iatricSystems[™]
eBook



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
How to Frame Your Policies & Procedures	4
Tips for Writing Policies & Procedures	5
Using Policies to Safeguard Your Remote Workforce	6
Turning Violations into Learning Opportunities	7
Concluding Thoughts	8

Introduction

Policies and procedures are far more than just general rules that your staff and employees need to follow. A well-written manual:

- Sets clear expectations for your staff
- Ensures quality care to patients
- Provides a safe workplace environment
- Reduces mistakes and mitigates risk

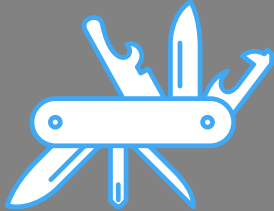
Overall, policies and procedures provide the foundation for operational excellence and better patient care; but how do you ensure you have a strong foundation?

This eBook will help you overcome the top challenges of developing effective policies and procedures. Whether you're writing an entirely new employee handbook, revamping existing procedures, or introducing new policies, you'll be able to present clear and precise policies and procedures that your staff can successfully put into action.



How to Frame Your Policies & Procedures

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What's in a Name?

Naming your policy or procedure isn't a time to get creative. Consider what people would type into a search field to find the policy or procedure. Keep it simple and succinct. This will make it easier to find, and more importantly, to follow.

Be Resourceful

Remember, you're not on your own. A good place to start is referencing an outline of what the policy or procedure needs to address. You can use regulatory requirements like a HIPAA checklist as a foundation to ensure you check off every mandatory item in your policy.

Put the Meat on the Bones

Once you've created your outline and have all your main and sub-headers in place, work down from there to fill in the blanks. Taking a systematic approach and individually refining each section will help you ensure all outlined requirements are clearly addressed.

Already have a Privacy Policy in place? Use this [Checklist](#) to determine if it's time for an update. And then read on below for details about how to update your current policy.

Tips for Writing Policies and Procedures

Keep it Simple

Healthcare procedures and policies are often much lengthier than those in other industries. Having a well-organized structure will make it easier for employees to navigate and follow:

- Combine related topics into a single policy
- Clearly define key terms that could be otherwise misconstrued
- Use consistent naming and numbering conventions across all policies



Choose Your Words Wisely

If an incident were to result in a lawsuit, the wording in your policy could be used against you or hold you to an absolute that you might not be able to follow 100% of the time:

- Avoid superlative words like the highest, safest, best, etc.
- Exercise caution when using absolutes such as shall, must, do not, etc.
- Be specific when identifying tasks that need to take place

Leave Breadcrumbs of References

Don't burden the reader with searching for references that a policy might address. A list of references at the bottom of the document will also be helpful during routine reviews:

- Note the date of the original policy and each subsequent review or modification
- Provide references to other policy regulations when necessary
- Cite specific federal or state statutes that the policy addresses



Using Policies to Safeguard Your Remote Workforce

Since the increase of mobile workforces, employees and business owners have realized the benefits of not having to commute and work in an office setting. According to *getAbstract*, 43 percent of full-time American employees say they hope to work remotely more often even after the economy reopens.

However, all of these new opportunities also come with new security risks. Since employees are using their own internet and potentially their own computers to connect to your internal network, this can leave your systems and networks more vulnerable. Weak security protocols and uninformed employees can potentially lead to security breaches and cyber hackings. These risks are why businesses and remote employees need to work together to build security and policy procedures to protect company and customer data.



Top Security & Policy Procedures for Remote Workers Should Include:

- Hardware and software configuration standards
- Information security, confidentiality, and email policies
- Access privileges, multi-factor authentication, and access hierarchy
- Connectivity guidelines and acceptable use policies
- Third-party protections and standards
- Policy compliance, governance, and enforcement
- Access and equipment ownership requirements



Turning Violations into Learning Opportunities

We're all human, and violations are bound to happen. The important thing is to try to understand why it happened and if there's a way to minimize future policy and procedure mistakes from happening again.

Keep Score:

By documenting policy and procedure violations, you'll be able to uncover patterns that might reveal a simple solution.

Assess the Issues:

Is there a particular policy that is violated more often?
Is there a specific department, job title, or person that has more frequent violations?

Improve Culture:

Use these metrics to create a roadmap for your organization to route where you can strengthen training, awareness, and clarify common violations.

Review Regularly:

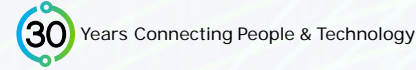
Routinely reviewing both internal policies and regulatory requirements will give you the opportunity to refresh critical requirements and outdated policies.

Concluding Thoughts

In the healthcare industry, you regularly experience life-or-death scenarios. Policies and procedures can help your team make the best decisions and provide exceptional care to patients. However, merely having policies and procedures in place is just the first step – creating awareness and continual follow-up is of the utmost importance to put those policies and procedures into action.

About

iatricSystems™



iatricSystems, an independent business unit of Harris Healthcare, is a healthcare technology company dedicated to helping healthcare organizations enhance their IT investments. We do so with our diverse healthcare experience, an extensive partner network, and our proven capabilities in privacy & security, EHR optimization, and interoperability. For 30 years, iatricSystems has delivered solutions to more than 1,300 healthcare organizations and has integrated more than 800 vendor solutions.

For more information about [protecting patient privacy](#) or [securing remote access](#) to your network, contact us at info@iatric.com or visit www.iatric.com.

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