



### **POLICY ON TRANSITION TO ADULT HEALTH CARE**

Holyoke Pediatric Associates (HPA) strives to serve as our patients' Medical Home by partnering with patients and parents/guardians to deliver comprehensive, coordinated, family-centered care. We seek to respect both our patients' legal rights to privacy and parents'/guardians' concerns for the well-being of their child or young adult. We assist our patients to learn and practice the skills they will need as adults to become responsible for their own health and to manage their health care. We work with patients and families to assure a smooth transition to adult health care.

#### **Patients 12-17 years old:**

Beginning at age 12 years, at least part of a patient's medical visit will generally be in private, and the parent/guardian will be asked to step out of the exam room. The patient or parent/guardian may ask for a nurse to be present in the exam room. Discussions of certain sensitive issues, such as sexual and mental health and substance use, will remain confidential and will not be shared with the parent/guardian unless the adolescent requests. Medical records documenting the corresponding portions of the medical exam and discussion also will be treated as confidential, to the extent required by law, and will be released to a parent/guardian or other person only with the patient's written authorization.

For adolescent patients who have developmental disabilities or other special health needs, it may be necessary and appropriate to modify these policies to accommodate their needs. We welcome patients and parents/guardians to discuss special needs with us, so that we may plan reasonable accommodations together.

In addition, HPA will inform the parent/guardian of any life-threatening situation or behavior involving any patient younger than age 18 years, whether disclosed by the patient or becoming evident through medical examination. In this case, we will inform the patient that we will disclose or have disclosed this information to the parent/guardian.

#### **Patients 18 years and older:**

Patients 18 years and older are adults under the law.

HPA will respect these patients right to make their own health care decisions and manage their own health care, unless a court has determined that they are not able to do so and has appointed a legal guardian. Please provide us a copy of the court's decree or equivalent documentation, if you have been appointed the legal guardian of your adult child so that we may conform to the terms of your guardianship.

HPA requires patients 18 years and older to make their own appointments at HPA, request their own referrals, and communicate about other care, billing, and insurance matters. We will gladly assist our patients of any age to understand and practice these skills. HPA cannot communicate with a parent or

other person on the patient's behalf unless s/he is the legal guardian or authorized health care agent (proxy), or the patient has provided a written release.

HPA will respect the right of patients' age 18 years and older to privacy regarding their health information and records. Providers will meet with and examine these patients privately unless the patient requests that the parent or other person be present. A young adult patient may authorize a parent or other person to receive medical information or records by signing a release of information. A release form is available at [www.holyokepediatrics.com](http://www.holyokepediatrics.com) or you may ask your HPA provider or Medical Records for a copy.

Understanding your insurer's privacy policies:

Please be aware that young adults and children, who are insured under a parent's family policy, might receive statements from the insurer at the parent's address. HPA has no control over insurers' procedures and is not responsible for any resulting disclosure of health information. Please contact your insurer about any questions regarding its privacy procedures and policies.

Transitioning from pediatric to adult health care: a partnership:

HPA serves patients from birth to 22 years of age. We welcome our young adult patients to continue in our care until they are 22 years old. By that age, patients should transition to an adult primary care provider (usually a doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant practicing Family Medicine or Internal Medicine), as well as adult providers for any medical specialty care the patient may receive. We encourage you to start collecting information about adult health care providers well before age 22, usually around age 18-21 years. Remember to check with your insurer or ask the adult provider which insurances are accepted.

We are available to discuss health care transition with patients and families. We are committed to partnering with you throughout the process to assure a smooth transition.

Once you select your adult provider, please remember to sign a release promptly so we may send your medical records to this provider. You may use HPA's release form at [www.holyokepediatrics.com](http://www.holyokepediatrics.com), the adult provider's form, or other equivalent form. Please be aware that HPA disposes of medical records according to state law. This generally means that we retain records for seven years after the last date of service or until age 18 years, whichever is longer.

**If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to speak with your HPA provider or our practice administrator at 413-536-2393.**

*These policies follow generally accepted guidelines for pediatric practices, and federal and state law, including HIPAA (the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) and Mass. General Laws (MGL). Please refer to: MGL c. 112 §12F and §12S Minors and Treatment for Pregnancy and Prenatal Care; MGL c. 111 §117 Minors and Treatment for Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS; MGL c. 123 §10 Minors and Treatment for Mental Health; and MGL c. 112 §12E Minors and Treatment for Substance Abuse. This policy is not legal advice. Please consult a lawyer if you need legal advice.*