

Electronic Signature Policy

Definitions

...of digitized signature

An electronic image of an individual's handwritten signature reproduced in its identical form using a pen tablet.

...of electronic signature

Usually contains date and time stamps and includes a printed statement (i.e., "Electronically Signed By") followed by the practitioner's name and preferably their applicable credentials. An example of an acceptable electronic signature: "Electronically Signed By: John Doe, M.D. 09/01/2012 @ 07:23 A.M."

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the validity and legal effect of medical records which are signed electronically.

Policy Statement

Individuals who order and/or provide healthcare services to patients in correctional facilities must be clearly identified in the patient medical records. The signature for each entry must be legible and should include the practitioner's first and last name. For clarification purposes, it is recommended that the practitioner also include their applicable credentials (i.e., D.O., M.D., N.P., P.A.).

The purpose of an ordering and/or treating practitioner's signature in patients' medical records, orders, test findings, etc. is to demonstrate that services have been accurately and fully documented, reviewed and authenticated. Additionally, it confirms the provider has certified the medical necessity and reasonableness for the service(s).

Acceptable methods of electronically signing records, orders, and/or test findings include:

- Digitized signature
- Electronic signature

The following are examples of printed statements that should be readable and viewable as part of the electronic record, output, or printed report.

- Electronically Signed By
- Signed By
- Authenticated By
- Sealed By
- Data entered By
- Approved By
- Completed By
- Verified By
- Finalized By
- Validated By
- Generated By
- Confirmed By
- Reviewed By

In the event of an addendum to a record, the addendum should be added to the top or bottom of the report and a second electronic signature applied that includes the date and time the addendum was electronically signed. For example:

- Electronically Signed By: John Doe, M.D. 09/01/2012 @ 07:23 A.M.
- Electronically Signed By: John Doe, M.D. 09/02/2012 @ 04:17 P.M.

When more than one signature is required, such as in the case of a physician assistant dictating under the supervision of a physician, both signatures should appear on the bottom of the report similar to the sample format above.

If the system does not support dual signature functionality, an alternative is to have a statement on the bottom of the report that reads "Dictated By: Jane Doe, P.A., under the supervision of John Doe, M.D." with the electronic signature affixed by the supervising physician.

If initials are displayed on a screen or printed view of a document, such as on a flowsheet, the full signature should be referenced on the document.

Unacceptable methods of electronically signing records, orders and/or test findings include:

- Indications that a document has been "signed but not read"
- Entries made on behalf of another
- Forgery