

Carnegie Mellon University Health Services

Health Care Power of Attorney (POA) and Confidentiality

Is medical treatment at UHS confidential? The Family Educational and Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well as state laws and professional and ethical codes preclude University Health Services from routinely sharing your medical information and counseling records with third parties, including your parents, without your written consent. However, in a health care emergency where you are incapacitated or otherwise unable to advocate for yourself, UHS will notify your emergency contact if necessary, regardless of whether or not you have a health care power of attorney.

What is a Health Care Power of Attorney? A Health Care Power of Attorney (also known as an Advance Health Care Directive) is a document that designates someone to make health care decisions on your behalf if you become incapacitated.

What is an emergency contact? An emergency contact is someone you designate in writing to be notified about you if there's an emergency. The CMU Student Information System has a record of your emergency contact.

Are they the same thing? An emergency contact does not automatically have the power to make health care decisions for you. You can make the same person your emergency contact and your health care decision-maker. If they are not the same person, you should give your emergency contact a copy of your health care POA.

What happens in a health care emergency? If you are at UHS during a health care emergency, you will be asked to contact your emergency contact if you are able to. If you are incapacitated or otherwise unable to advocate for yourself, UHS will attempt to notify your emergency contact. UHS does not provide treatment for incapacitating conditions and would transfer you to a hospital. Hospitals will follow their own notification protocols.

If I give UHS a copy of my health care POA, what will UHS do with it?

UHS will store your health care POA with your file.

Does UHS automatically provide hospitals with my POA?

No. It is your responsibility to keep the health care POA available if you need to go to the hospital. If the UHS is sending you to the hospital during regular hours of operation, however, and you are incapacitated or unable to advocate for yourself, UHS will contact your emergency contact and make every effort to supply a copy of your health care POA to the hospital/ ambulance technicians.