

OUR CORPORATE COMPLIANCE PROGRAM

Introduction

The Cortland Regional Medical Center (CRMC) Corporate Compliance Program reflects in the clearest possible terms our commitment to exemplary health care and business operations. A key component of the compliance program is our *Code of Ethical Conduct*, which describes what is expected and required from our employees, physicians, students, volunteers, and people with whom we do business.

The Board of Trustees of CRMC oversees the Compliance Program and has delegated responsibility for the program to the President / CEO and a Corporate Compliance Officer (CCO) appointed by the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the President / CEO. To assist the CEO and CCO, a Corporate Compliance Committee was established to provide additional oversight and guidance.

Our Corporate Compliance Committee is chaired by our Corporate Compliance/HIPAA Privacy Officer and standing membership on our Committee includes: the President / CEO and all members of the Senior Leadership Team; the Director of Revenue Cycle; the Director of HIM; the HIPAA Security Officer; the Director of Quality/Risk Manager; the Practice Administrator for the Regional Medical Practice, P.C.; the Executive Director of Cortland Medical Supply, the Director of Long Term Home Health Care Program; the Compliance Auditor; the Director of Human Resources, the Chief Information Officer; the Administrator CRMC Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, the Director of Pharmacy, the Director of Case Management, and a representative of the CRMC Board of Trustees.

These individuals are available to assist you in complying with the laws, regulations, policies and procedures that govern our day-to-day operations and in meeting the standards included in our *Code of Ethical Conduct*.

Your Obligation to Report

Any situation that you believe violates our *Code of Ethical Conduct*, our policies and procedures, or the laws and regulations that affect us must be reported immediately. Failure to report a known violation may result in disciplinary action, even if you were not involved.

Non-Retaliation

No disciplinary action or other form of retaliation or revenge will be taken against any staff member who, in good faith, reports a suspected violation. However, reporting a violation does not protect an employee from appropriate disciplinary action for their own involvement or conduct; nonetheless, self-disclosure may be viewed favorably and may serve to reduce potential disciplinary actions.

How to Report a Violation

Suspected violations should be reported first to your supervisor. If you are unable to report your concern to your supervisor because you believe they may be involved in the situation you wish to report, you may report your concern directly to their manager or senior manager. If, for whatever reason, you are uncomfortable reporting your concern through the normal chain of command, you may also report your concern to any member of the Corporate Compliance Committee or to any of the following resources:

1. Corporate Compliance Officer (607) 428-5150
2. HIPAA Privacy Officer (607) 428-5150
3. HIPAA Security Officer (607) 756-3579
4. Compliance Hotline (607) 428-5151
5. Compliance Fax (607) 428-5069
6. Compliance.Office@cortlandregional.org
7. Any member of the Corporate Compliance Committee

You may make your report anonymously, in person, by telephone, or in writing. Written reports may be made by email, regular mail, or interoffice mail. Anonymous reports may be made over the Hotline or in writing. When reporting, employees should provide as much detail as possible about the reported event so that CRMC can undertake an efficient and prompt investigation and take any needed remedial action.

Compliance Hotline

CRMC maintains an unmanned Compliance Hotline for employees wishing to report suspected violations anonymously. The Hotline is available 24 hours / day, 365 days per year. It is maintained in the Compliance Office and does not have caller ID.

Employees who call the Hotline get prompted after a number of rings to leave a detailed message concerning the event they wish to report. The Compliance Officer, or a member of the Corporate Compliance Committee, picks up the messages between 9 am and 5 pm Monday through Friday. Incidents requiring an immediate response should not be reported to the Hotline. The number for the Hotline is (607) 428-5151.

Questions About Whether to Report

If you have a question about whether you should report, call your Supervisor, Department Manager, or the Compliance Officer. You may contact the Compliance Officer at any time to discuss a concern. In the absence of the Compliance Officer, you may contact any member of the Compliance Committee, Senior Management, or the Human Resource Department. Whenever possible you should discuss your concern with your supervisor first.

The following guide should be used when reporting a suspected violation or unethical behavior.

1. **DO** immediately report what you know or suspect;
2. **DO NOT** confront the person suspected of acting illegally;
3. **DO NOT** attempt to “investigate” the conduct yourself;
4. **DO NOT** discuss your concerns with anyone, whether an employee or an outsider other than to make a report to your supervisor, the Corporate Compliance Officer, member of the Corporate Compliance Committee, Senior Manager or the hotline.

Investigations of Suspected Non Compliance

Suspected violations of our *Code of Ethical Conduct*, laws and regulations, or policies and procedures will be reviewed promptly. Some concerns may be reported to others to assist in their resolution. Your concerns will only be shared with others on a need to know basis unless you indicate otherwise. All staff members are expected to cooperate fully with the review efforts. CRMC will report the outcome of the investigation to the reporter if he or she is willing to be identified.

Receipt of the Code of Ethical Conduct

All staff members, volunteers, and Trustees will attest to receiving, understanding, and agreeing to abide by this *Code of Ethical Conduct* on initial hire, appointment or association and annually thereafter.

OUR CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

The Board of Trustees has issued this *Code of Ethical Conduct* to provide guidance to ensure that our work is done in an ethical and legal manner. In addition, it emphasizes the shared common values that guide our actions and help resolve questions about inappropriate conduct in the workplace.

The principles set forth in our *Code of Ethical Conduct* are mandatory and must be followed by all CRMC employees, staff, and affiliated persons. Failure to comply with the *Code of Ethical Conduct* is a serious matter, which may lead to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination.

While we have attempted to be comprehensive, our *Code of Ethical Conduct* does not cover every possible situation or question that may arise; however, it does provide a basic description of unacceptable conduct or performance that may lead to corrective action or termination of employment. Prohibited actions are not excused simply because they were taken with the knowledge of, or at the direction of, a supervisor. Therefore, common or customary actions may violate the *Code of Ethical Conduct*.

Your adherence to our *Code of Ethical Conduct*, as well as all CRMC corporate and department policies, regulations, and rules of conduct is expected. Our *Code of Ethical Conduct* is a “living document.” As such, it will be revised periodically to respond to changing conditions. If you have any questions, please talk to your supervisor. Management has been asked to be available and responsive to all staff questions and concerns.



OUR CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT 

To Our Community

We are committed to improving the health of the community we serve by providing quality health care services in a caring and efficient manner without discrimination.

To Our Employees and Medical Staff

We are committed to creating a work environment in which employees and medical staff are treated respectfully, fairly, and given opportunities for professional development.

To Our Assets

We are committed to protecting our assets, and the assets of others entrusted to us, against loss, theft, destruction, and misuse.

To Our Payors

We are committed to maintaining timely and accurate patient records and to bill only for services actually rendered as documented in patient medical records.

To Our Vendors

We are committed to avoiding conflicts, or the appearance of conflicts, between our private interests and our responsibilities as employees and staff.

To Our Regulators

We are committed to complying with all laws and regulations and to operating in an environment where the health, safety, privacy, and comfort of patients and employees come first.

STANDARD 1

Quality of Care and Services

We are committed to improving the health of the community we serve by providing the highest quality health care services in a caring and efficient manner.

- A. We will respect the uniqueness of each person within our community and assure that each is treated with respect, dignity, and courtesy at all times.
- B. We will not discriminate in the provision of care and services.
- C. We will consider a patient's culture, religion, and personal requests in determining and executing the plan of care. However, personal requests by patients and/or their family members will be superseded by our obligation to deliver quality care.
- D. We will require all clinicians to provide care that is appropriate to each patient without regard to either the financial ability of the patient to pay or to the financial consideration that may result to the clinicians because of ordering or not ordering needed care.
- E. We will ensure that each patient receives quality care regardless of his/her ability to pay or source of payment.
- F. We will provide treatment to our patients in a safe manner based on their clinical, psychological, and other needs.
- G. We will seek to provide patients with products that perform as intended and that comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and professional standards.

STANDARD 2

Privacy and Confidentiality

We are committed to fulfilling regulatory standards designed to handle all facets of information management, including reimbursement, coding, security, and patient records.

- A. We will protect against the unauthorized use and disclosure of protected health information, where prohibited.
- B. We will not disclose restricted/confidential information or documents.

- C. We will not permit any person to examine or make copies of any restricted/confidential information unless authorized to do so.
- D. We will restrict access and use of each element of protected health information to only those persons who have a need to utilize the information in the fulfillment of their tasks.

STANDARD 3

Coding/ Billing Integrity and Record Keeping

We are committed to maintaining timely and accurate patient records and to billing only for services actually rendered, as documented in patient medical records.

- A. We will take steps to ensure that all bills submitted for payment are accurate and comply with federal and state laws and regulations and will audit our billing practices to ensure accuracy.
- B. We will ensure that CRMC bills for services, using only billing codes that accurately describe the services that were provided.
- C. We will take immediate steps to alert the payor, correct the bill, and refund credits when due if inaccuracies are discovered in a bill that has already been submitted.
- D. We will maintain timely, accurate, and complete medical records concerning each patient treated at a CRMC facility.

STANDARD 4

Customer Service

We are committed to applying the customer service standards that are core to our values to every interaction with every individual, at all times focusing on serving our patients and families.

- A. We will respect and protect the dignity of each person.
- B. We will treat customers with courtesy at all times.
- C. We take pride in our work environment and recognize customers as our responsibility at all times.
- D. We will ensure our customers' right to privacy and modesty and will maintain a secure and trusting environment.
- E. We will maintain professional behavior and dress to build customer confidence.
- F. We will provide service in a prompt, timely manner, putting the needs of customers first.

STANDARD 5

Compliance with Laws and Regulations

We require all staff members to conduct their individual duties and all CRMC operations in a manner that meets all applicable legal, ethical, and regulatory standards.

- A. We will not pursue any business opportunity that requires action in unethical or illegal activity.
- B. We will not participate in any corrupt business practice, including bribery, kickbacks, or payoffs.
- C. We will maintain all business data, records, and reports completely, accurately, and truthfully. All accounting books and records will be maintained according to generally accepted accounting practices and internal control procedures of CRMC.
- D. We will ensure all marketing and advertising by CRMC is truthful, fair, accurate, and complete. We will not make any false or misleading statements about CRMC or its services or about another organization or its services.
- E. We will ensure all contracts with clinicians and referral sources detail the specific services to be provided. Each proposed contract will be reviewed and approved in advance by compliance counsel.
- F. We will ensure every contract payment or other benefit provided to clinicians and referral sources are for the services and at the rate required by a written contract.
- G. We will comply with all federal copyright laws as they pertain to licensing software products, as well as printed and audio-visual materials.
- H. We are committed to maintaining an environment of care in which all CRMC facilities comply with governmental and regulatory rules that promote workplace health and safety. Employees are expected to promptly disclose any condition hazardous to human health or the environment. CRMC will take immediate action upon becoming aware of such conditions.

STANDARD 6

Work Place Conduct and Employment Practices

We are committed to creating a work environment in which employees, physicians, and others are treated respectfully and fairly and are afforded opportunities for professional development.

- A. We will not discriminate. We will hire, train, promote, and pay on the basis of personal competence and potential for advancement without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, or other classifications protected by law or CRMC policy.
- B. We will maintain zero tolerance for all conduct that is sexually harassing, abusive, or offensive toward our staff, physicians, volunteers, and students.
- C. We will not tolerate workplace violence. As part of our commitment to provide a safe workplace, we will maintain a work environment free of misconduct that harasses, disrupts, or interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment, which includes threats or acts of violence in the workplace. All persons within CRMC facilities will:
 - 1. Refrain from any threats or acts of violence and immediately report any threats or acts of violence to appropriate personnel and/or security.
 - 2. Not possess firearms, other weapons, explosive devices, or other dangerous materials while on CRMC property.
- D. We must remain free of the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol, and we will not tolerate the non-prescribed use of controlled substances. (Questions or concerns about effects of prescribed medications and their effect on your job performance should be referred to your supervisor.)
- E. Some staff members routinely have access to prescription drugs, controlled substances, and other medical supplies. We require that these items be maintained, dispensed, and transported in compliance with laws and regulations and then only by authorized individuals.
- F. We will not allow persons to report to work, or otherwise provide services at CRMC, unless they possess the mental acuity and sharpness necessary to perform their tasks in a safe and prudent manner.
- G. We will maintain the integrity and quality of our job performance by ensuring that staff members are familiar with applicable laws, rules, and regulations governing their area of work. CRMC will only employ those who possess the proper experience and competencies required to fulfill their tasks. In this regard CRMC will:
 - 1. Ensure that staff members who provide patient care are properly licensed and trained.
 - 2. Rely on employees to report deficiencies or errors to supervisors for resolution.
 - 3. Identify areas for improvement and take steps to make positive changes.

STANDARD 7

Research

We are committed to following ethical standards in any research conducted by physicians and other professional staff.

- A. We will notify patients whose personal physician proposes to engage in or perform research affecting their care or treatment that they have the right to refuse such participation and not compromise their health care. Also, patients will be:
 - 1. Given a description of the research/treatment and expected benefits.
 - 2. Advised of potential discomfort and risks of the research /treatment.
 - 3. Given a description of alternative beneficial services, if available.
- B. We will not inappropriately bill for experimental or unapproved drugs or devices.
- C. We will not misuse or abuse research information.
- D. We will apply for and administer grant funds in accordance with the terms of the grantor.

STANDARD 8

Conflicts of Interest

We are committed to regulating our activities to avoid conflicts of interest, actual impropriety, and/or an appearance of impropriety.

- A. We have policies to guide employees in determining conflicts of interest and the appropriateness of activities or behaviors with vendors, providers, contractors, third party payers, and government entities.
- B. We prohibit staff, physicians, and others affiliated with CRMC from using their positions, or knowledge obtained through their positions, to profit personally or to assist others in profiting at CRMC's expense.
- C. We conduct all business transactions with vendors, contractors, and other third parties free from inducements intended to influence our decision-making.

- D. We make sure preferential treatment is avoided when CRMC enters into any financial arrangement with a current or former trustee, or current or former employee. The nature of such proposed arrangements must always be disclosed fully to the appropriate corporate officers.
- E. We do not solicit or accept anything of value, including monetary gifts, trips, or discounts, which would suggest or create any obligation from employees, vendors, or others. Such gifts, if received, are to be returned. We may accept and retain from vendors non-monetary, unsolicited gifts such as advertising items, not to exceed \$50.00 in value. Cash gifts, including gift certificates, may not be accepted.
- F. We ensure that when business is placed with any company in which a CRMC employee has a family relationship that no conflict of interest exists. Information about any potential conflict of interest must be disclosed in advance and written permission secured from the appropriate CRMC authority. Such permission is not given if the practice violates applicable laws or policies.
- G. We will avoid frequent acceptance of elaborate meals, refreshments, or entertainment from vendors.
- H. We will not accept outside employment (“moonlighting”) unless that employment is disclosed to management.

STANDARD 9

Protecting Property, Assets, and Information

We are committed to protecting both our assets, and the assets of others entrusted to us, against loss, theft, destruction, and misuse.

- A. We will protect CRMC assets, property, facilities, equipment and supplies and others’ property from theft, damage, or other misuse.
- B. We will not disclose information, directly or indirectly, or use it for any purposes except as required in the course of our employment with CRMC.
- C. We will refrain from discussing restricted/confidential information in any public area, such as open office areas, elevators, hallways, etc.
- D. To defend against cyber-attacks, we will not open emails, attachments, links or visit websites from untrusted sources. We will notify IS immediately if we see anything suspicious while working on the computer.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What should I do if I see a violation?

Report violations immediately. Try to follow the normal “chain of command” in your department. If you are not comfortable doing this, contact the Corporate Compliance Officer, a member of the Compliance Committee, or Human Resources.

2. Will an anonymous call show up on a caller ID?

Calls made to the Compliance Office and / or to the Compliance Hotline are anonymous. Neither have caller ID and no attempt will ever be made to trace a call. Therefore, unless you choose to identify yourself calls made to the Compliance Officer or to the Compliance Hotline will remain anonymous.

3. What kind of information should I report?

Report fraud and ethical abuses such as inappropriate billing, inappropriate relationships with vendors, etc.

4. How will I know the violation has been corrected?

All allegations of fraud and abuse will be investigated thoroughly. If the problem was in your immediate work area, you may see a change in procedures or potentially a change in personnel.

5. Can I accept season football tickets to the Carrier Dome from a vendor that I do a lot of business with?

No. You should not accept a gift of this type.

6. Someone wants to pay me \$200 to design a web page for her home-based business, but since I don’t have a computer at home, I want to use my computer at work during non-work time. Can I do this?

No. Use of CRMC property for personal business is not permitted. In other words, you may not use CRMC assets for someone else’s business.

7. **I am a RN on a med-surg unit where we do lots of blood transfusions. However, my religion does not permit blood transfusion, so I always ask not to participate in this procedure. So far, it has been allowed, but my supervisor says I may have to participate in the future. Do I have to?**

CRMC's philosophy is to respect everyone's religion, including yours. CRMC and your supervisor will make every effort to meet your request. However, if a patient's care could be compromised without your assistance, you will be required to participate in the procedure.

8. **My supervisor sends me e-mail messages that are suggestive and offensive. When I discussed this issue with him, he did not take me seriously. He continues to send me these offensive e-mails. I no longer want to open his e-mails, yet I must in order to do my job. I am afraid to take this issue further, because he does my annual performance review.**

The supervisor's behavior described above is inappropriate conduct. CRMC will not tolerate any type of sexual harassment. Sharing sexually suggestive e-mail messages or other unwelcome sexual advances do not belong in the workplace. If you encounter unwelcome sexual advances, you can address it using your normal chain-of-command or you may directly call Human Resources, the Compliance Officer, or member of the Compliance Committee.

9. **I have a family member who recently received treatment at the facility where I am employed; however, he is not telling the family about his condition. May I access his records, so I can explain his condition to my family?**

No. Access and use of protected health information is only for those persons who have a need to utilize the information to fulfill the tasks of their assigned job. If your job requires you to access this information, you must not disclose this confidential information to his family members.