

Medical Care and Privacy Laws

While you have been the one coordinating healthcare and making medical decisions for your Longhorn in the past, things change when they reach age 18 and can legally consent to their own treatment, make their own medical decisions, and have their medical information treated confidentially.

Not having access to your Longhorn's medical information or not being present when they make medical decisions can feel uncomfortable and be hard to accept, but federal privacy laws prohibit healthcare facilities, including University Health Services, from disclosing a patient's medical information to any individual, organization, or facility unless the patient provides written permission --- and this includes parents.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Most parental worries concern your Longhorn's having a **medical emergency that leaves them unable to speak for themselves**, and either you don't know about the emergency, or you legally can't get information or become involved in their care. Here are a few suggestions to help ease those fears:

"In Case of Emergency" contacts - Ask your Longhorn to put this information in their phone, wallet or purse, and/or other logical places where emergency personnel might look.

Medical Power of Attorney – Your Longhorn can complete legal documents making you their medical power of attorney. As such, you can make medical decisions for them if they are incapacitated (unable to speak for themselves). Keep copies in easy-to-find locations, so you can produce one quickly if needed. For more information including a Medical Power of Attorney template, go to the [Texas Medical Association](#).

Students who want to complete documents making someone their medical power of attorney, can get free assistance at [Legal Services for Students](#), which is part of the Office of the Dean of Students.

University Health Services is not an emergency room. EMS will not bring students experiencing emergencies to UHS, and UHS will transfer a student to an emergency room if they come to UHS with a medical condition that is or becomes an emergency. It is very rare that a student is transferred from UHS to an ER who is unable to speak for themselves and, therefore, is unable to consent to UHS contacting you.

There is, however, a **UHS Consent for Verbal Disclosure Form** that allows UHS providers to contact you to provide the types of information your Longhorn designates on the form. Your Longhorn can complete this form online via MyUHS at www.healthyhorns.utexas.edu, print it and fax or mail it to UHS (see the form), or get and complete it at the UHS General Medicine check-in desk on the second floor of the Student Services Building.

NON-EMERGENCY/ROUTINE MEDICAL CARE

Parents may initially think it's best to have access to all of their Longhorn's medical information. Before influencing them to sign a form giving you broad access to verbal information about all healthcare received at a particular medical facility, please consider the following:

First, if your Longhorn feels it's best for a healthcare provider to talk with you about a health concern, he or she easily can give permission for that to happen, regardless of the healthcare facility and including an emergency situation where they can speak for themselves.

Next, in most instances you'll be kept in the loop by your Longhorn. UHS survey research shows that parents/ guardians are the first resource to whom most students turn when they're ill or injured or need healthcare advice.

Last, there are times when your Longhorn may need healthcare for issues they would prefer to keep private. Knowing that their parent/guardian has potential access to their health information could keep them from seeking this care in a timely fashion or at all.

If your student wants to give you access to their UHS healthcare information, they can complete and submit a [Consent for Verbal Disclosure of Health Information form](#).

ADDITIONAL, HELPFUL INFORMATION

- There is no, all-encompassing "HIPAA Form" that your Longhorn can sign to give you access to all of their healthcare information at every facility at which they might receive care. A "HIPAA Form" must be completed for each healthcare facility. Find an example [here](#).
- Because UHS is not an emergency room, UHS staff will be unaware of the vast majority of student medical emergencies unless informed by another campus department.
- For more information about the types of information that can and cannot be released by UHS, please read their [Notice of Privacy Practices](#).
- If your phone, address and other contact information changes, be sure your student updates their University Emergency Contact information by logging on [here](#).