SUBJECT: DISCLOSURE OF UNANTICIPATED EVENTS

POLICY:

Patients, parents of minors, and/or significant others will be advised if the patient should experience an unanticipated event.

PROCEDURE:

1. The organization will designate one person as responsible for coordinating disclosure communication. This person will most likely be the patient safety officer, but another person may be selected based upon communication skills.

2. Communication should be open, honest, and limited to the information known to be accurate. Speculation on the cause, fault, or even on the outcome must not occur.

3. The attending physician or Medical Director may confer with the Center staff member to review what will be communicated to the patient or patient’s parents/significant others.

4. The designated Center communicator should give the patient the information that he or she needs to understand what is happening to him or her treatment, why any changes have taken place in that plan, and what to be aware of in the form of reactions or consequences. Patients should receive enough information to appreciate how the situation affects them, but do not have enough information to shift their focus to external forces or blame. This is important as it gives patients the ability to make informed decisions on treatment plan changes, and bestows upon them the responsibility of communicating any changes in their condition to their health care providers.

5. The designee will advise the patient that the matter will be investigated and appropriate changes made, but the immediate concern is the patient’s safety and well-being.

6. The designee should not use words which might imply negligence (e.g., error, wrong, mistake, accident). If the patient asks whether an unanticipated outcome was due to an error, the answer should be truthful and not speculative. The patient should be told the truth when the truth is known.

7. The designee will document the disclosure and submit this documentation with the investigation of the cause and effect of the unanticipated event.