



# Code of Ethics

ValleyHealth



# message

FROM THE  
PRESIDENT AND CEO

The mission of Valley Health System is Serving our Community by Improving Health. This is our cornerstone. Our values—integrity, compassion, collaboration, courage, innovation and excellence—influence what we do and how we do it.

Health care is complicated. There are many ethical standards, laws and regulations, and policies. This Code of Ethics is our promise to follow all of these expectations as we serve our community.

The Code touches all aspects of the services we provide. It is a reliable guide for our day-to-day work.

In short, this Code is a description of the promises we make.

- Promises to those we serve: patients, residents and family members
- Promises to co-workers and those who serve with us
- Promises to Valley Health System and the community we serve
- Promises to our suppliers and business partners
- Promises to regulators and those who pay for our services

This Code provides ethical principles to support our direction and our strategies, including our commitments to:

- Provide care that is safe and reliable and honors what our patients are experiencing,
- Create a culture in the workplace that is fair, and
- Put honesty first in all our partnerships.

As a famous author put it,

“Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching.”

I’m counting on all of us to follow this simple truth.

Thank you for all you do to advance the mission of Valley Health System.

**Mark Nantz**

*President and CEO*



# message

FROM THE  
CHIEF COMPLIANCE  
OFFICER

As Mark Nantz so aptly put it, this Code of Ethics is a guide. It explains the ethical, legal and policy standards that all of us must follow as employees, volunteers, medical staff members, officers and trustees of Valley Health System (VHS).

This Code supports our commitment to follow high ethical standards in two ways. First, it is like a map, pointing us in the correct direction. And second, it is like a set of guardrails, keeping us from driving off the road.

Compliance with the Code is a condition of employment at Valley Health. And all VHS policies must be consistent with this document.

The Code does not address every detail, of every situation, for every person. It does provide principles, suggestions and resources to help staff.

As the Code was developed, the Ethics and Compliance team asked for and received significant input from employees from all departments, locations and levels of the organization.

Given its importance, the Code of Ethics was reviewed in detail and approved by both the VHS Executive Management Team and Board of Trustees.

Our leadership team hopes you find the Code instructive and helpful. Please contact me or members of the Ethics and Compliance Department, or use the “Helpful Resources for Employees” section at the back of the Code, if you need more information.

Thank you.

**Walt Sowers**

*Chief Compliance Officer*



# What are my responsibilities?

As Valley Health team members, we have an important role to play in living out our values and supporting this Code of Ethics. We must all...

## Follow the Code

- Understand and follow the Code, paying special attention to those sections that apply to your work. Claiming “I didn’t know” is not a valid reason for not following the Code.
- Ask for help when you’re not sure what to do.
- Cooperate with internal investigations involving a potential violation of the Code.

## Communicate with Honesty

- Communicate openly and honestly about clinical, operational and financial matters, while respecting confidential and proprietary information.
- Never lie or mislead anyone doing business with, or competing with, Valley Health.
- Always conduct yourself with honesty.



## Speak Up, Listen Up, Follow Up

- **Speak up** if aware of individual conduct or business practices that you believe violate the Code. You can:
  - Talk with your supervisor
  - Talk with your supervisor’s manager
  - Talk with the Chief Compliance Officer
  - Call the Valley Health Helpline at 844-601-1872, or submit a report online at <https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/59304/index.html>.
- **Listen up** and take concerns seriously if you are a supervisor.
- **Follow up** in an appropriate and timely manner to address concerns once you fully understand them. Ask for help if you need it.

## Never Retaliate

Valley Health has a policy of zero tolerance for any form of retaliation against those who report Code of Ethics concerns in good faith. We encourage honest discussion. Zero tolerance for retaliation applies to direct and indirect retaliation, retaliatory actions and threats of action and retaliation from supervisors, as well as from coworkers.

## Cooperate with Government Investigations

It is the policy of Valley Health to cooperate and respond appropriately in any lawful government investigation.

### **You must:**

- Always be truthful.
- Never lie or deceive.
- Never destroy or alter any document the investigator may be seeking.

### **You have the right to:**

- Ask the government investigator for official identification.
- Decide whether or not to meet with her/him.
- Inform the investigator that you only wish to respond to questions at work, or in the presence of your supervisor or an attorney representing Valley Health.
- Consult with legal counsel before making a decision.


Regardless of your decision, you are strongly encouraged to notify your supervisor and your Ethics and Compliance leader.

## Additional Responsibilities of Leaders

At Valley Health leaders are held to a high standard. If you are a supervisor, manager, director, senior executive, medical staff leader or board member, you have important responsibilities to:

- Set a good example of high standards in the performance of your duties. Communicate your expectations for the same high standards to those in your areas of responsibility.
- Ensure that those you lead understand and follow the Code of Ethics, and hold them accountable when they do not.



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- Listen and take seriously questions and concerns from your team, and act on their concerns in a timely and appropriate manner.
  - Support and promote Valley Health’s non-retaliation policy.

## Code of Ethics Promises

### To Patients and Those We Serve

#### **We promise to.....**

- Honor the right of each person to receive compassionate, reliable, high quality and patient focused care.
- Assure that care is provided consistent with all professional standards.
- Speak respectfully to those we serve.
- Maintain a positive, customer service orientation with patients and families.
- Respond to patient and resident requests in a timely and supportive manner.
- Discuss treatment options and involve patients in decisions about their care.
- Address ethical conflicts that may arise in the delivery of care, including end-of-life issues.
- Respect advance directives.
- Provide care that is necessary and appropriate, and in the best interest of the patient.
- Provide medical screening and stabilization to all who seek emergency services, regardless of ability to pay.
- Commit to safety with every patient, every time.
- Speak up when there are quality or safety issues, including “near misses” and “warning signs”.

- Learn from mistakes and model a “just culture” that emphasizes continuous learning.
- Ask questions, provide feedback and suggest innovations to reduce variation and improve the patient experience.
- Share information about safe, respectful and reliable care with staff, patients and families.
- Create and maintain timely and accurate medical records.
- Protect the privacy of all personal health information.
- Except in rare circumstances,
  - Not accept items of value from patients, residents or their family members. If they wish to make a contribution to the organization, refer them to the fundraising department.
  - Not give gifts or items of monetary value to Medicare or Medicaid beneficiaries.



**To protect personal health information (PHI), DO NOT:**

- Access, review or use PHI unless required by your job
- Leave PHI (electronic or paper) unattended
- Discuss PHI in public areas
- Store PHI on unauthorized devices
- Release or remove PHI unless authorized
- Discuss or post PHI on social media

**DO notify your supervisor or the Compliance Department**

- if you believe PHI has been lost, stolen or accessed inappropriately



I know a medical error has occurred?

▶ First, ensure the safety of the patient(s) involved. Then notify your supervisor, and submit a report into RiskQual, Valley Health's patient safety and quality reporting system. Follow our risk reporting policy to ensure that communication is handled appropriately.

One of my patients is transgender and asks that their partner be included in their discharge planning process?

▶ Since the patient has requested that their partner be recognized as a member of their family for discharge planning purposes, you should invite the patient's partner to attend. Our patients, residents, family members and loved ones have a right to compassionate care that respects their dignity, diversity and specific wishes.

A friend of mine was admitted to the hospital, and I want to access her medical record to let her family know her condition.

▶ You may only access this information if it is required to do your job as a member of your friend's care team. If an employee inappropriately accesses personal health information, disciplinary action could include termination. In addition, personal health information may only be shared with proper authorization.

# To Employees and Those Colleagues Who Serve With Us

## We promise to.....

- Treat all with dignity and respect.
- Communicate in a clear, open, honest and respectful manner.
- Maintain a positive, customer service orientation with colleagues.
- Respond to requests in a timely and professional manner.
- Create a supportive, team environment that enhances cooperation, mutual respect and accountability.
- Ask questions, provide feedback and suggest innovations for workplace processes.
- Accept feedback.
- Address differences with those directly involved.
- Promote diversity in the workplace, and create an inclusive environment where all are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.
- Not discriminate in any employment action on the basis of race, color, age, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), religion, physical or mental disability, national origin, veteran status or any other status protected by law.
- Not engage in inappropriate physical contact.
- Promote a safe workplace environment to protect colleagues from workplace hazards, and promote health and safety.
- Speak up when we observe discrimination, harassment, intimidation, violence or safety issues in the workplace.

### **HARASSMENT includes:**

- Inappropriate touching
- Degrading or humiliating jokes
- Insulting or disparaging comments
- Unwanted sexual advances
- Verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature
- Behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive workplace environment

### **WORKPLACE VIOLENCE includes:**

- Acts of physical violence or disruptive behavior
- Threats of such violence or behavior
- Acts or threats that may be intentional or unintentional and may involve colleagues, patients, residents, physicians, contractors, suppliers or visitors

### **When colleagues SPEAK UP:**

- Thank them
- Remember that every voice is important
- View the concern as an opportunity to learn
- Ask questions, be curious and seek to understand
- Be encouraging
- Follow through on their concerns



- Protect the confidentiality of the personal information of colleagues, such as wage and salary, benefits, social security numbers, personnel actions, medical and/or financial information.
- Maintain a safe work environment by performing our duties free from the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Avoid unauthorized access, use, diversion or theft of controlled substances.
- Protect the confidentiality of medical peer reviewed information.



A colleague is very “friendly” with other coworkers, hugging and touching in ways I think are inappropriate?

You should discuss the situation with your supervisor. You should also feel free to discuss your discomfort directly with your colleague, as they may not be aware that their behavior may make others uncomfortable. If you remain concerned, contact a higher-level manager, Human Resources, or the Integrity and Ethics Helpline. Note that this situation and the recommended actions would be no different if the colleague who is touching is male or female, and if the person being touched is the same or different gender.

A colleague makes disparaging remarks about people from certain ethnic backgrounds?

It is not appropriate to make jokes or disparaging remarks based on ethnicity, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation/identification, disability or other characteristic. This behavior contributes to intolerance, and may be considered harassment. Discuss this matter with your supervisor or Human Resources or call the Integrity and Ethics Helpline.

I raised a concern with my supervisor about a major flaw in one of our processes, and ever since that conversation she has been assigning me more undesirable shifts than others on the team?

▶ Valley Health employees must never engage in, or permit, behavior that retaliates against someone for reporting an issue or concern. Retaliation takes many forms, and some of these behaviors can be subtle, yet still very harmful. Discuss this matter with your Ethics and Compliance leader.

One of my colleagues appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs at work?

▶ You should act immediately to assure that patients, residents or coworkers are not at risk of harm from the actions of your colleague. Then notify your supervisor, a higher level manager or Human Resources right away. There could be a medical condition causing your coworker's behavior rather than alcohol or drugs, but your supervisor or higher level manager will need to evaluate the situation.

My supervisor tells me I have to start work an hour earlier because we need coverage in our department, even though I've had the same schedule for years.

▶ Your supervisor has the right to change your schedule to meet the operational needs of the department. If you are unable to comply with the new schedule, discuss the situation with your supervisor.

I see a staff member berating another person?

▶ Valley Health is committed to promoting a respectful work environment. Behavior that is rude, embarrassing or intimidating, including the use of profane or abusive language, is inappropriate. Discuss what you observed with your supervisor or higher level manager; contact the Medical Staff office or Human Resources; or call Valley Health's Integrity and Ethics Helpline at 844-601-1872.

# To Valley Health System and the Community We Serve

## We promise to.....

- Represent VHS honestly and ethically in all work activities.
  - Never give false or misleading information to anyone doing business with or competing with Valley Health.
- Be a good steward of all VHS resources, such as, materials, supplies, equipment, staff time, systems and financial assets.
  - Obtain supervisor's approval before participating in non-VHS activities during regular work hours, or before using VHS resources for activities unrelated to your work.
  - Follow VHS policies and procedures for the use of information systems, such as, access and appropriate use, limitations on personal use, and protecting the privacy and security of data and information.
  - All communication systems are the property of VHS, and are to be used primarily for business purposes; VHS reserves the right to monitor staff use of computers, email, instant messaging, intranet, internet access, telephone, voicemail, etc.
- Maintain complete and accurate financial records of activities conducted on behalf of VHS, and follow policies and procedures for reporting business travel and expenses.
- Safeguard all VHS records, and follow VHS policies and procedures for document retention and destruction.
- Maintain required licenses, certifications and other credentials.



## Use of Social Media

- Exercise good judgment when using social media.
- Do not post any VHS confidential or proprietary information on social media, including photos and/or information about patients, colleagues, suppliers or work projects.
- Do not reference VHS when using social media to promote outside businesses, political campaigns or religious causes.
- Do not use VHS devices or communication systems to view, post, download or distribute materials that are threatening, harassing, profane, obscene or derogatory.
- Be respectful when using a personal site that may identify you as a VHS employee.



- Respect the environment and follow all environmental laws.
  - Operate facilities with all necessary permits, approvals and controls.
  - Follow all VHS policies and procedures for the handling and disposal of hazardous materials and infectious waste.
- Treat VHS business information as confidential and proprietary; never share it with the public.
  - Confidential and proprietary info includes individually identifiable patient, resident or participant information; personnel data; clinical information and quality data; financial reports, pricing and cost data; information relating to partnerships, affiliations, mergers, acquisitions and divestitures; supplier information and data; marketing strategies; and strategic plans. This information takes many forms, and includes paper or electronic records, verbal and written communications, and various forms of media.
- Cooperate fully in all audits and investigations, and answer questions honestly.
- Avoid situations that could create a potential conflict of interest. These include:
  - **Outside employment** – Obtain approval from a supervisor before accepting an offer to work for an organization that conducts business with or competes with VHS.
  - **Financial interests** – As VHS employees, we cannot retain or contract with a company if we or a family member has a financial interest in the business.
  - **Endorsements** – Do not endorse suppliers or vendors doing business with VHS without obtaining approval from a supervisor.
  - **Service on outside boards** – VHS encourages employees to actively participate in charitable and civic organizations that benefit our community. Obtain approval from a supervisor before accepting an invitation to join the board of an organization that could create a conflict of interest with job duties at VHS.





I would like to get some extra hours working at another healthcare provider in the region?

▶ Before you consider an offer to work for a potential competitor of Valley Health, discuss the situation with your supervisor to make sure there are no potential issues with accepting outside employment that could interfere with your Valley Health responsibilities. Disclosing this issue is especially important for full-time employees.

I have my own business on the side, and I want to use my Valley Health email during working hours to advertise my products to my coworkers?

▶ Employees are not permitted to use their work email to solicit other employees for any purpose, including commercial, charitable or other non-Valley Health purposes. You must also be a good steward of all Valley Health resources and assets, which includes your time while at work.

A colleague posts the details about clinical situations at the hospital on social media?

▶ Disclosing sensitive information on social media involving patients is inappropriate. Omitting names doesn't guarantee that the patient cannot be identified, as the details of the situation alone could allow identification. This not only puts our patients at risk, but it also violates federal privacy laws which can lead to large fines and criminal penalties for both Valley Health and the person who makes the posting on social media. It is also inappropriate to disclose on social media confidential or proprietary business information.

## To Suppliers and Business Partners

### We promise to.....

- Decline gifts, entertainment, meals or other incentives that:
  - Could influence, or appear to influence, purchasing or contracting decisions.
  - Could encourage, reward, or appear to encourage or reward, patient referrals.
  - Could be perceived as a bribe, payoff or other attempt to gain a competitive advantage.
- Decline cash or cash equivalents such as checks or gift cards from suppliers or business partners.
  - Non-cash items of nominal value (e.g. pens, note pads, coffee mugs) may be accepted occasionally.
  - Perishable or consumable items of nominal value (e.g. fruit, flowers, candies) may be accepted when given to a department or unit and shared with colleagues.
- Follow Valley Health guidelines when accepting meals or social activities paid for by suppliers or business partners, including guidelines that mandate:
  - These events are infrequent (e.g. 1 – 2 times per year).
  - The event precedes or follows a legitimate business purpose (e.g. discussing business topics involving Valley Health ).
  - The setting for the event is appropriate for discussing business topics.
  - The supplier or business partner is present.
  - The expense is modest (e.g. does not exceed \$50) or when VHS employees pay their own expenses.
  - VHS does not incur travel or lodging expenses to participate in the meal or activity.
  - Exceptions to this policy require the advance approval of your supervisor or the Chief Compliance Officer.
  - Note: These requirements do not apply to meals and refreshments provided in connection with conferences or educational programs sponsored by the supplier or business partner.
- Follow Valley Health guidelines when suppliers or business partners donate, or are asked to donate, to fundraising activities that benefit VHS and its Foundation.
  - VHS requires that the solicitation of suppliers or business partners for charitable contributions must be made by members of the VHS fundraising department.

- Fundraising requests must never be made in exchange for VHS business, or influence current or future VHS business decisions.
- It is permissible for VHS employees to participate with the supplier or business partner in social or entertainment activities associated with a fundraising event, with prior approval of the employee's supervisor.
- VHS employees are encouraged to make a personal donation to the fundraiser equal to, or greater than, the value of the event.
- Follow Valley Health guidelines when accepting invitations to attend local or out-of-town programs, workshops, seminars or conferences sponsored by a supplier or business partner, including guidelines that mandate:
  - The event has a legitimate educational purpose or supports a VHS business objective.
  - The event is infrequent (e.g. 1 – 2 times per year).
  - There is advance approval by the employee's supervisor.
  - VHS, and not the supplier or business partner, pays for travel and lodging.
  - Exceptions to this policy require the advance approval of the supervisor.



I'm the point of contact for a VHS supplier, who asks me how much his company should donate to Valley Health's capital campaign?

▶ Refer the supplier to Valley Health's fundraising department. You should also advise the supplier that the supplier's decision whether or not to donate, or how much to donate, is not a factor in current or future contracting decisions.

Pharmaceutical representatives visit our office to provide information and they always want to provide lunches for staff?

▶ In general, Valley Health discourages the acceptance of meals paid for, or provided by, suppliers. The pharmaceutical industry has developed standards that all drug representatives are required to follow, and you should insist that representatives follow rules developed by/for their industry. Meals must be infrequent, and must be associated with presentations with a scientific or educational value. In addition, the meals must: a) be modest; b) not be part of an entertainment or recreational event; and c) be provided in a manner conducive to education.

A vendor gives me two tickets to a major sports venue for me to use as I please?

▶ Politely decline gifts that involve social or entertainment activities. You may accept the tickets if you personally pay the vendor for the cost of the tickets. There may be limited circumstances where there is a legitimate business purpose to meet with a vendor or partner at such an event for purposes of exploring opportunities that would advance Valley Health's mission and strategy. However, these circumstances are limited and must be approved in advance.

## To Regulators and Those Who Pay for Our Services

### We promise to.....

- Act with honesty and integrity in all activities, including:
  - Surveys conducted by accrediting or external agencies.
  - Cost, quality, safety and tax reports filed with federal and state regulatory agencies.
- Follow all laws, regulations and VHS policies that apply to work, and ask for help if needed.
- Participate in training and educational programs that assist employees in understanding laws, regulations and VHS policies and procedures.
- Follow all requirements of federal and state health programs (e.g. Medicare and Medicaid), commercial insurance companies and other third party payers:
  - Deliver high-quality, medically necessary and appropriate services.
  - Create and maintain complete and accurate medical records.
  - Submit complete and accurate claims for services provided.
  - Protect the privacy and security of health information.
- Avoid engaging in discussions or agreements with competitors relating to pricing, market strategies, payer strategies or wages and benefits.
- Avoid contracting, employing or billing for services rendered by an individual or entity excluded from federal or state healthcare programs.



### Fraud and Abuse Laws

There are many federal and state laws to protect healthcare programs like Medicare and Medicaid, and others that pay for the care VHS provides. Remember and follow these rules:

- Do not submit claims for services not provided
- Do not submit inaccurate claims for services provided
- Do not submit claims for medically unnecessary services
- Do not make false statements or submissions to obtain payment
- Do not conceal or improperly avoid a duty to repay a health care program
- Do not offer money or anything of value to encourage or reward patient referrals

- Conduct medical research according to the highest ethical standards and in accordance with federal and state laws, and Institutional Review Board and VHS policies and procedures.
- Present truthful information in marketing activities.
- Cooperate with and immediately notify a supervisor of any government investigation.
  - Never destroy or alter documents, records or correspondence requested as part of a government investigation.
  - Never lie or make false statements to a government investigator.
  - Do not offer gifts or items of value to a government representative.
- Avoid contributing, or directing the contribution, of VHS funds to any political candidate, party or campaign.
- Never create a false record or file a false claim to a federal health program, such as Medicare or Medicaid.
  - The federal False Claims Act and related state laws allow individuals with original information about fraudulent activities involving government programs to file a lawsuit on behalf of the government and, if successful, to receive a portion of the recoveries received by the government.
  - VHS prohibits employees, agents or contractors from knowingly presenting, or causing to be presented, claims for payment that are false or fraudulent.
- Follow the laws, regulations and policies required due to Valley Health's status as a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization operating solely for charitable purposes.



### **Relationships with Physicians and Referral Sources**

There are many laws that relate to Valley Health's relationships with physicians and others who refer patients and residents. There are two key principles that apply to these relationships:

- **We do not pay for referrals.** Patient and resident referrals are based solely on medical needs and our ability to provide a needed service. Never pay or offer payment to anyone for referrals.
- **We do not accept payment for referrals.** Never solicit or accept payment or anything of value, directly or indirectly, in exchange for patient or resident referrals. We do not take into account the volume or value of referrals when making referrals to other healthcare providers.

- Do not use VHS property or assets for the private benefit of individuals with substantial influence over the organization.
- Do not pay more than “fair market value” (FMV) for goods and services, and do not provide goods and services below FMV.
- Do not campaign, directly or indirectly, for political candidates or organizations.
- Do not engage in substantial lobbying activities. As an organization, VHS may comment on legislation under consideration and may take public positions on issues relating to its operations and mission.



VHS was notified by Medicare about billing errors, and we corrected the claims but haven't addressed the process that caused the errors?

▶ Share your concerns with your supervisor and make sure both you and your supervisor fully understand the situation. If you are still concerned, contact a higher level supervisor or call the Integrity and Ethics Helpline.

A local home care agency provides us with gift cards to say “thank you” for referring our patients to them?

▶ Politely return all gift cards. Federal laws prohibit healthcare providers and their employees from offering or accepting anything of value to induce or encourage the referral of Medicare and Medicaid patients. Discuss the matter with a senior level manager or your Ethics and Compliance leader for appropriate follow-up with the home care agency.

A colleague posts a notice on a bulletin board in my department inviting employees to support a candidate for city council?

▶ This is prohibited and you should bring this situation to a supervisor's attention. Valley Health is a not-for-profit, tax exempt, charitable organization. There are various rules that must be followed to maintain tax-exempt status. For example, Valley Health and/or its employees may not campaign for political candidates or organizations in Valley Health premises or using Valley Health resources.

All Valley Health employees have an important role in supporting Valley Health's Code of Ethics. Our leadership and the Ethics and Compliance team thank you for living the guidelines outlined in the previous pages.

See the following page for Helpful Resources for Employees, and visit the Valley Health intranet for online access to additional information on Ethics and Compliance, Risk Management, and more.



## Helpful Resources for Employees

Have questions or need more information on Valley Health's Code of Ethics?

Looking for links to websites for reporting risk or filing a complaint? Resources are available on the Valley Health Intranet.

Click **Risk Management** on the VHS intranet to access the Risk team directory.

Contact **Human Resources**. You will find a list of **HR Business Partners** on the intranet; click Human Resources, then Contacts.

Click **Corporate Compliance** on the intranet to access the **Integrity & Ethics Helpline** and information about the Ethics and Compliance team.

To use the **Integrity & Ethics Helpline**:

Call 844-601-1872 – or –

Visit <https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/59304/index.html> – or –

Click on the image below on the Corporate Compliance intranet page:



For general inquiries, call Compliance at 540-536-8909.





