



## LICENSING ALERT

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Deputy Secretary for Quality Assurance

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Division of Drug and Alcohol Program Licensure  
Licensing Alert 2-04

### **LOCKED STORAGE CONTAINERS: RECORD STORAGE**

This licensing alert is to provide clarification regarding the Division's enforcement of the regulation pertinent to locked storage containers. 28 Pa. Code 709.28(b) states "the project shall secure client records within locked storage containers." The intent of this regulation is that the "locked storage container" consists of a locked filing cabinet, filing box, safe or similar container containing only client records and accessible only by those staff persons needing access to carry out their respective job duties. Since the Department licenses facilities that are located within health care facilities, including hospitals, the Department permitted this regulation to be interpreted more broadly for these particular facilities to allow for medical record rooms, where the entire room is locked or secured in some manner, with the room containing only medical records stored on open shelving units and accessible to only a limited number of staff persons. The Department permits this arrangement because medical record rooms are staffed during the facility's hours of operation and access to the records is limited to authorized persons, thus assuring the client records remain confidential.

During recent licensing inspections, it has been observed that the use of "medical record rooms" has expanded to the point that these rooms are used for multiple purposes, not exclusively for client record storage, and that these additional uses compromise client confidentiality. Licensed facilities not located in health care facilities are using record rooms that are not staffed by medical record personnel. Unstaffed record rooms with client records stored on open shelving units are not in compliance with the intent of the regulation. These record rooms have become multipurpose, with some being used as storage areas and workstations. If a room is designated as a record room, it must be locked at all times, unless staffed by authorized personnel, and must be dedicated solely to that purpose, with all items in the room pertaining to record storage. If facsimile machines and copiers are located in the record room, their use must be restricted to those staff authorized to have full access to patient records according to facility policy and procedure. Staff without access to records, e.g., billing and administrative staff, may not use the

facsimile machines or copiers located in the records room, since this practice would afford them full access to patient records.

In order to comply with this regulation, patient record rooms must be staffed or locked at all times; must not contain office equipment, e.g., copier or facsimile machine, for general use, and must not be used for any other purpose.

Questions on this alert may be directed to Carol Bashore, Frank Miller or Arvida Wanner at (717) 783-8675.