



**Institutional Handbook of Operating Procedures**  
**Policy 09.01.02**

Section: Clinical Policies	Responsible Vice President: Executive Vice President and CEO UTMB Health System
Subject: Admission, Discharge, and Transfer	Responsible Entity: Revenue Cycle – Patient Access Department

**I. Title**

Management of Patient Belongings

**II. Policy**

- A. UTMB is not responsible for any personal belongings of patients or visitors on UTMB facility premises, including patient rooms. Whenever possible, UTMB employees will release the patient’s personal belongings to the patient’s family or designee when the patient is unable to manage them.
  
- B. UTMB may accept custody of a patient’s belongings when necessary. UTMB may accept custody of patients’ belongings, including valuables such as jewelry, electronic devices, cash, credit/debit cards, and medication, when in UTMB’s sole discretion, it is determined that:
  - 1. acceptance is in UTMB’s and the patient’s best interests;
  - 2. acceptance is not likely to disrupt or compromise hospital operations, patient or employee safety;
  - 3. the patient is not capable of being responsible for the belongings and family or designee is unavailable to take custody of the belongings.
  
- C. An offender patients’ personal belongings will be retained by Texas Department of Corrections personnel. For information related to releasing patient belongings to outside law enforcement, see [Section X](#) of this policy below.

**III. Informing the Patient/ Representative**

- A. Prior to or upon arrival to UTMB, patients and/or their representatives will be advised that personal belongings that the patient brings to the facility should be given to a family member or a person designated by the patient.
  
- B. Patients will be informed of the circumstances in which UTMB will accept custody of belongings, as provided in the policy section above.

**IV. Documentation**

- A. When UTMB accepts custody of a patient’s belongings, valuables such as jewelry, electronic device, cash, credit/debit card, and medication, will be inventoried by two UTMB employees, placed in a tamper resistant bag, and signed by the patient.
  
- B. For unconscious/disoriented patients, the belongings should be inventoried by two (2) UTMB employees, placed in a sealed tamper resistant bag, and any available family member must witness and sign the inventory form.

**V. Areas for Storage of Patient Belongings**

**A. Galveston Campus & League City Campus**

1. Patient valuables will be deposited in the Revenue Cycle Operations Registration Office for safeguarding for thirty (30) days.
2. The Emergency Department (ED) will not maintain the valuables in the ED unless the patient is unconscious, has no other family member or designee to take the valuables, or if the patient goes directly to the Operating Room from the ED. UTMB will release the personal belongings once the patient's room is assigned or when the valuables can be turned over to patient's family member or designee.

**B. Angleton Danbury Campus**

Patient valuables are stored on the unit where the patient is admitted.

**VI. Transporting Patient Belongings/Valuables**

**A. Galveston Campus & League City Campus**

1. In the Emergency Department, the Nursing Staff is responsible for completing an inventory of the belongings and assisting the patients with storing their property while the patient is in the Emergency Department.
2. If patients are admitted to an inpatient room, the patient's valuables will follow the patient to the inpatient room.

**VII. Personal Medication**

Medications brought from home that are not approved for inpatient or clinic use shall be sent home with the patient's family member or designee. If medications cannot be removed from UTMB's facilities by patient's family or designee, the medications should be treated and stored as valuables.

**VIII. Release of Patient Belongings**

- A.** Valuables in the custody of UTMB will not be released to a patient's family member or designee without written authorization by the patient.
- B.** After thirty (30) days, unclaimed valuables will be turned over to the Bursar/Cash Receipting Office, where they will be kept for up to 3 years. If after 3 years, the belongings are still unclaimed, they will be transferred to the State as unclaimed property.

**IX. Release of Patient Belongs in the Event of Death or Incapacitation**

In the event of patient's incapacitation or death, UTMB may release patient's belongings to the patient's family member or designee with appropriate documentation (e.g., court order, Letter of Testamentary). These transactions will be handle by the department who has possession of the belongings.

**X. Release of Patient Belongings to Law Enforcement**

- A.** If UTMB has accepted custody of a patient's belongings, these belongings may be turned over to a law enforcement agency when the belongings are of evidentiary value connected with a criminal offense.
- B.** The belongings of a patient taken into custody for either a criminal offense or Emergency Detention Order (EDO) will be released to the patient, and the officer will take custody of both the patient and the belongings.

**XI. Related UTMB Policies and Procedures**

[Pharmacy 07.07 Medications Brought from Home](#)

**XII. Dates Approved or Amended**

<i>Originated: 04/01/1990</i>	
<i>Reviewed with Changes</i>	<i>Reviewed without Changes</i>
11/30/2011	
08/14/2014	
10/13/2017	

**XIII. Contact Information**

Revenue Cycle Bursar's Office  
(409) 772-6990