

Working from home for researchers

1. How do I set up at home to communicate with my research patients?

- i. If you do not have an NSHA device with VPN, send contact information for study participants to yourself through YOUR NSHA email or if the file is too large, send it via the Outlook Web App using SEND.nshealth.ca
- ii. [http://intra.nshealth.ca/privacy/Other/Secure%20File%20Transfer%20User%20Guide%20\(SEND.nshealth.ca\).pdf](http://intra.nshealth.ca/privacy/Other/Secure%20File%20Transfer%20User%20Guide%20(SEND.nshealth.ca).pdf)
- iii. Study participant contact information or any other required PHI cannot be saved to a home PC/laptop/smartphone.

2. IM/IT information: Privacy considerations at home

i. *Home office computers: Consider the Computer You Are Using!*

NSHA laptops have encrypted hard drives and are safe to use at home with the VPN. This means you are **PERMITTED** to store patient personal information or personal health information on a designated NSHA laptop if this is within the scope of your role within NSHA. Please note that information should always be stored on network drives rather than the computer's local drive as the local drive is not secure.

NSHA desktop computers DO NOT HAVE encrypted hard drives. This means you are NOT PERMITTED to store patient personal or personal health information on a designated NSHA desktop device even if this is within the scope of your role within NSHA. The security of materials on a desktop computer cannot be guaranteed when outside of an NSHA location.

ii. *Printing at home*

Although NSHA does not usually facilitate the capability of end-users to print while working at home, there will be limited accommodations allowed due to the unique circumstances we are now facing. Best practice would be to keep printing of patient and/or confidential information to a minimum to prevent inadvertent breaches – print only what is absolutely NECESSARY. It is mandatory that any print jobs done while working at home are kept secured and the end-user is in constant control of the information – this means safe storage, safe disposal (shredding of any confidential information must be done on site at NSHA) and safe travel of the information.

iii. *Can I take hard copies of study documents home?*

- No hardcopy PHI can be removed from NSHA property. If taking study binders home, any section with PHI must be removed.
- No hardcopies containing confidential Sponsor information (i.e. protocols, IB, contracts) can be removed from NSHA property.

3. How do I communicate with study participants?

1. *Electronically:*

Email and/or text communication must be done through an NSHA device per policy http://policy.nshealth.ca/Site_Published/NSHA/policy_details.aspx?policyDetails.QueryId.Id=74503

2. *Phone:*

- Use of your personal home or cell phone to speak with study participants is acceptable
- You should block your personal phone number when calling by using *67 on your iPhone or accessing the phone app on Android phones prior to making your call
- Do not store the patient in your contact list
- Do not keep study participant phone numbers in your call history
- Delete the number after each call
- Do not provide personal contact numbers to study participants
- Use pagers or emails if patients need to get in contact with you or
- Have your study participants call your office number to contact you. Ensure your voicemail greeting is specific to when or how often messages are retrieved and provide instruction for study participants to seek medical attention immediately if they have a medical concern.
- To access your voicemail from home dial 902-473-8000 and follow the prompts. If you do not know your voicemail password please call IT at 902-473-3399

4. How do I document communication with study participants while at home?

- Worksheets and progress notes taken when in contact with a study participant while at home should be safely stored to ensure continuity of patient confidentiality and prevent inadvertent breaches.
- Keep collection of patient PHI to a minimum amount/absolutely necessary to do your job.