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Local Hospitals Develop, Implement Consistent Vendor Interaction Standards

Franklin County hospital systems are working together to develop and promote appropriate practices within their facilities for how vendors and their representatives interact with hospital staff members and physicians.

Through the Central Ohio Hospital Council, hospital representatives have developed and are in the process of implementing "Community Standards on Vendor Interaction." The standards are designed to promote appropriate interactions between vendors and hospital personnel, assist with the enforcement of and compliance with hospital policies, and reinforce the importance of patient safety and privacy best practices.

The standards were approved in June by the COHC Board of Directors, comprised of the four Franklin County hospital system CEOs, and will take effect community-wide on Oct. 1.

"Bringing a level of standardization to hospital practices around vendor interactions will benefit not only our hospitals, their staffs, physicians and patients, but it also will help local vendors, who can expect some consistency among multiple facilities when conducting their business," said Jeff Klingler, Hospital Council president and CEO.

The "Community Standards on Vendor Interaction" include:

- Requirements vendor representatives must meet in order to gain access to hospital facilities, including consistent criteria when accessing patient-care areas;
- Common processes vendor representatives must undertake to be credentialed by hospitals; and
- Restrictions on gifts, including meals, cash and entertainment, to hospitals and their staff members.

"For many years, our hospitals have developed and implemented policies that deal appropriate vendor interactions with their staffs and physicians. What the standards taking effect next

month will do is bring some consistency to hospitals' practices, which, in turn, should improve vendor understanding and compliance," Klingler said.

The standards contain some new requirements, including one provision requiring vendors to wear red scrub hats when they are granted access to certain patient care areas. The requirement is intended to help physicians and others easily identify individuals who are in the area to conduct business versus those who are involved in the care of the patient.

The hospitals plan to share with other hospitals infractions made by vendors of the Community Standards. Hospital representatives will also meet quarterly to review and discuss such infractions.

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About the Central Ohio Hospital Council

The Central Ohio Hospital Council was created in 2008 and is comprised of Columbus' four hospital systems: Mount Carmel Health System, Nationwide Children's Hospital, OhioHealth and the Wexner Medical Center at The Ohio State University. The Hospital Council serves as the forum for community hospitals to collaborate with each other and with other community stakeholders to improve the quality, value and accessibility of health care in the central Ohio region. More information on the Council, including the "Community Standards on Vendor Interaction," is available at www.centralohiohospitals.org.