

# **Requests for VFPMS Clinical Photographs**

From 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007, the Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical Service will coordinate authorization and processing of requests for copies of clinical forensic photographs of injured children and adolescents. This guideline applies to non-genital photography.

All requests from Victoria Police, Child Protection and the Courts for forensic photographs taken by the Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical Service will be coordinated by VFPMS Administration.

This will enable a single point of contact for all requests for VFPMS photographs and a coordinated process to ensure appropriate authorization for release of sensitive photo-documentation. In addition, data will be collected to maintain an audit trail to ensure prompt processing of requests. An annual audit will be reported to the VFPMS Governance Committee to ensure efficient and effective management of this aspect of the service.

The processing of requests within each hospital, including the duplication of photographs and the appropriate labeling and authentication of photo-documentation, will remain the responsibility of the individual photographic department or service (including sub-contracted services) at each hospital.

## **How do I get photographs?**

All requests for photo-documentation are to be forwarded to VFPMS Administration by completing

- [Application Form](#)
- Enquiries can be made to [enquiries@vfpms.org.au](mailto:enquiries@vfpms.org.au) or [sofia.mehreen@rch.org.au](mailto:sofia.mehreen@rch.org.au)

Fax (03) 9345 4105

Telephone (03) 9345 4297

Postal address:

VFPMS  
Royal Children's Hospital  
Flemington Road  
Parkville Vic 3052

## **What can I expect to receive?**

A single set of photographs will be provided in accordance with professional standards for clinical forensic photography. (Eg use of colour chart and measuring scale)

Note that in general, only one set of copies of photographs will be available. The original photographs will remain part of the child's health record. Negatives will not be released.

When Victoria Police requires photographs to further their investigation of a suspected crime, some sites may be able to provide a CDROM of digital images. Note that this is only a possibility from sites that use digital photography rather than film. Arrangements will need to be made to ensure that original images are identified, secure, safeguarded and that access to sensitive photo-documentation is restricted.

# **Requests for VFPMS Clinical Photographs**

VFPMS will ensure that each set off photographs / delivery package identifies:

- Contact name (as provided on the request form)
- Name of requesting agency
- Delivery address (as provided on the request form)
- UR No. as a reference only

Each photograph will identify

- UR Number
- Child's name
- Photographer's name
- Photo date
- View the location on the body (eg left arm above wrist)
- The number and sequence (eg 6 of 23 )

## **Consent**

Consent for clinical photography must be obtained prior to the procedure. It is the responsibility of treating medical staff to ensure that matters of competency to consent, legal authority to consent, consent from mature minors (in accordance with the Gillick principle) and assent from the child have been obtained. Written informed consent, specific for photo-documentation and release of photographs to Child Protection and Police, is recommended.

## **Authorization for release in the absence of parental consent**

When statutory interveners require photo-documentation to investigate suspected child abuse, legislation permits protective interveners to access information without parental or guardians' consent.

Photo-documentation may be subpoenaed for court.

Authorization by VFPMS for the release of photo-documentation is dependent on the purpose for which the documentation is sought and the identification of the professional making the request. Photo-documentation will only be released to protective interveners (Child Protection and Victoria Police) in accordance with the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and other legislation dealing with Health Records, Health Information, Freedom of Information and Privacy.

## **Maintenance of Security of Photo-documentation**

Individual hospitals and photographic departments / services cannot be responsible for photo-documentation once it has been released.

Note that in Victoria, the media is not bound by the Health Records Act 2001. Under no circumstances should photo-documentation of children or adolescents be released to the media.

A parent, guardian or child's access to photo-documentation should be made in consultation with the medico-legal advisors at the hospital where photographs were taken. This is usually provided by the hospital in accordance with the Health Records Act 2001, or Freedom of Information Act.