



## Protecting Patient Privacy through Masking Information in Alberta Netcare

The *Health Information Act* (HIA) establishes rules to protect the privacy of an individual's health information, as well as regulate how health information can be collected, used and disclosed. It requires that, as custodians (and affiliates), Alberta Netcare users **consider any expressed wishes** about limiting the disclosure of an individual's health information through Alberta Netcare.

Albertans may request that their health information in Alberta Netcare be "masked". *Global Person-Level Masking* (GPLM) applies to an individual's health information that is available through Alberta Netcare; this does not include demographic information such as first and last name, date of birth, gender and personal health number.

### How does Global Person Level Masking Work?

Once applied to an individual's record, GPLM makes accessing patient health information through Alberta Netcare a two-step process. The Alberta Netcare user must select the reason for the unmasking before the health information can be viewed. The six reasons are: Patient Consent, Direct Patient Care/Clinical Need, Medical Emergency, Public Health Follow-up, For Authorized Release of Patient Information, and As Required by Law.

The unmasking of health information is logged and subject to auditing, as are all viewings through Alberta Netcare.

**Note:** GPLM in Alberta Netcare does not mask an individual's health information in other electronic information systems used by health services providers in Alberta.

## Requesting a Mask

Individuals wishing to request GPLM should contact a participating custodian, ideally one with whom they already have a current care relationship. The custodian must complete the application form in conjunction with the individual and then submit the application on the individual's behalf. A full set of guidelines and step-by-step instructions for completing the form are available on the Alberta Netcare Portal Login Page, under the heading of Administrative Forms: <https://portal.albertanetcare.ca/ab/NetcareLogin.htm>.

**Note:** There may be circumstances where a custodian is unable to authorize GPLM for an individual, for example, if masking that information could pose a threat to public health and safety.

## Rescinding a Mask

An individual may request that a mask be rescinded by contacting a participating custodian. A request to rescind a mask may also be initiated by a health service provider if he or she becomes aware of changing circumstances that affect an individual's eligibility for masking. In this case, custodians or delegates will make every attempt to inform the individual of their decision prior to removal of the mask. A full set of guidelines and step-by-step instructions for completing the form are available on the Alberta Netcare Portal Login Page, under the heading of Administrative Forms: <https://portal.albertanetcare.ca/ab/NetcareLogin.htm>

For more information about GPLM please visit the Alberta Netcare Portal Learning Centre (direct link from the Portal Login page). FAQs are also available in the Learning Centre.

The Health Information Act Help Desk is also available to answer questions about GPLM:

*Phone:* 780-427-8089 (toll free 310-0000)

*Email:* [hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca](mailto:hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca)