

HIPAA Training for Staff

HIPAA Overview

What is HIPAA?

HIPAA stands for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, a federal law which was passed in 1996. One aspect of HIPAA, known as the Privacy Rule, provides patients with certain rights with respect to their health information, requires that health care providers protect the privacy of health information, and requires that those working for health care providers be trained in policies and procedures related to maintaining privacy. This aspect of HIPAA went into effect on April 14, 2003. This document provides an overview of HIPAA to ensure that you are aware of your responsibilities while working.

What are the key points of HIPAA?

PHI

HIPAA identifies those records which are affected by the regulation as Protected Health Information (PHI). PHI is defined as any information which identifies the individual and which is related to an individual's physical or mental health, health care or health care payment.

Some examples of health information include:

- Medical charts
- Billing information
- X-rays and films
- Lab test results
- Diagnosis and treatment data

Some examples of identifiers include:

- Name and address
- Phone number
- Medical record number
- Social security number
- Photos
- Billing or other account numbers
- Date of birth or date of visit

Patient Rights

HIPAA affords patients the following rights with respect to their protected health information PHI:

- Right to be notified of our privacy practices
- Right to access and amend their designated record set
- Right to an accounting of who has reviewed their health information other than for treatment, payment or healthcare operations.
- Right to request that access to their health information be restricted or to allow for confidential communication of that health information
- Right to file a complaint with the US Department of Health and Human Services

Privacy

HIPAA requires that we maintain the privacy of health information by:

- Limiting access to health information to those who are involved in treatment of the patient, payment for that treatment and our own health care operations
- Restricting access for purposes other than those listed above to those instances which were authorized by the patient or which fall into specific categories defined by the federal regulations.
- Providing or viewing only the minimal amount of health information necessary to perform these functions.

How does HIPAA impact how I perform my job?

For all individuals working care must be taken to:

Ensure the confidentiality of any PHI which you have access to by:

- Not sharing the information with others who have no need to know, including co-workers, family members or friends
- Minimizing opportunities for patient information to be overheard by others
- Securing paperwork which contains PHI from viewing by others by storing such paperwork in a drawer or folder when not in use
- Closing computer programs containing patient information when not in use
- Limiting use of e-mail of PHI to only those circumstances when the information can not be sent another way
- Using a cover sheet when faxing PHI
- Never sharing passwords
- Disposing of information containing PHI properly such as shredding paper files

Limit access to PHI by:

- Only viewing those health records which are necessary for your job
- Checking that individuals asking for PHI have a legitimate reason and if you are unsure, check with your supervisor
- Checking with your supervisor regarding requests for access other than by a treating clinician or individual involved in processing payment.
- When access is provided to those whose access is legitimate but who are not involved in treatment, payment or health care operations, that access must be noted in the accounting for disclosures log.

Important information for licensed clinical staff

BrightStar uses secure web applications to create and transmit PHI. These web applications help facilitate a timely transmission of information to and from our licensed staff to ensure timely patient care.

- **OneHub** is a secure web portal where patient information is posted into the file of each clinician assigned to provide care to that patient. This allows you to view the patient's H&P prior to your visit and to review other clinician's notes. While you have the ability to download the patient information, you should only do so because it is necessary to have hard-copy with you during the visit. If you download the information YOU MUST:
 - **Properly shred the document when you are finished**
 - **Delete the soft copy for your computer immediately**

- **Use of BrightStar iPads:** In some long-term cases, a BrightStar iPad is configured for that patient. It is designed to be used only by the assigned nursing staff. Each iPad has a client-specific “Shift Note” template to be completed at the end of each shift. This information is securely transmitted for review and archival in the patient’s electronic chart.

When your position involves interacting with patients, please be aware that patients may wish to act on their HIPAA patient’s rights. Such requests should be directed to your supervisor as BrightStar has specific procedures and forms which must be followed in handling the request.

What happens when I leave?

Your obligation to maintain the privacy of health information continues even after you leave. Patients rely on us, to never share their health information inappropriately.

Who should I speak to if I have questions?

Should you have question about your responsibilities under HIPAA please ask your supervisor, contact the privacy office