



HIPAA Training

What is HIPAA?

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) was enacted in 1996.

- It provides the ability to transfer and continue health insurance coverage for workers and their families when they change or lose their jobs;
- Reduces health care fraud;
- Mandates industry-wide standards for health care information on electronic billing; and
- Requires the protection and confidential handling of protected health information

The Evolution of HIPAA

Originally enacted to make sure you could keep health insurance coverage if you were laid off or switched jobs, HIPAA has grown to provide protection under the law for many seemingly unrelated things, including the types of information you will be dealing with in your position.

With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act of 2010 there are substantial penalties for failure to certify or comply with the new standards and operating rules.

Information HIPAA Protects

- Medical records
- Medical prescriptions
- Address
- Phone number
- Zip code
- Social security number
- Any personal information

How Does This Affect You?

Virtually every paper document you touch will contain some sort of HIPAA protected information.

It is easy to understand that we must protect information when it is in paper form, but did you realize a seemingly innocent conversation with a friend or family member can lead to a HIPAA violation?

Sharing the name of a client or the specifics of the services you provide to a client, becomes a violation of HIPAA policy.

Opportunities for HIPAA Violations

Seemingly innocent encounters can often result in unintentional violations of HIPAA.

- Speaking on a phone in public can result in overheard protected information.
- Lunch with friends on a day off or a chance encounter with acquaintances while working with a Client can also present opportunities for violations.
- Discuss how best to handle these situations with your Supervisor to avoid unintentional violations.

Is HIPAA Something New?

No, HIPAA regulations have been around since 1996 in some form or another, but it wasn't until 2003 that the government required compliance with its statutes and regulations.

In the beginning it was hard for the writers of the regulations to anticipate every instance that might require regulation. HIPAA is always changing in efforts to address those situations and improve the protection it provides.

HIPAA

- Each agency is responsible for health care information they hold about their clients.
- HIPAA keeps client's information private and secure.



I can't be everywhere and watch everything!

Thank goodness you don't have to! HIPAA assigns the responsibility of protecting information to the agency that holds the information.

You are not responsible for monitoring other agencies, they must police their own internal handling of protected information.

There are exceptions. If you become aware of a violation of HIPAA policy committed by another agency we are required to report that violation.

HIPAA

- Everyone must give their permission for other agencies or family members to get their information.
- Everyone has the right to see their records or information.



Can HIPAA Information Be Shared?

HIPAA allows information to be used and even shared, under certain circumstances. The main goal of HIPAA is to protect information from being misused or shared with the wrong people.

Who are the right people?

Individuals have the right to share their information with whomever they please, but you must have the individuals permission to share it. Your clients, or Guardians of your clients must provide written permission to share this information with anyone outside the agencies providing the services.

Protected Information

Protected information can be anywhere. On someone's desk, being printed or copied at a print station, on an unprotected computer screen, in an e-mail, on a cell phone, laptop, or even in a car.

Staff who work directly with clients will often carry certain information about a client with them when they leave the office. Those staff members need to be especially diligent about guarding protected information.

Protected Information is Everywhere!

There are two places you should never find or place HIPAA protected information.

Never dispose of paperwork that contains protected information in the trash or in the recycle bin.

Protected information must be shredded to maintain privacy.

If You Find a Protected Document?

First things first, pick it up!

Don't assume that because the document was on the floor that it is not protected or needed.

Never toss the paper in the trash, recycle bin or take it home with you.

HIPAA

- Privacy
- Security
- Transactions



Computers too?

Yes, computers too. HIPAA regulations standardize some transactions between computers to help lessen the chance of a violation. Computers are often used to store data which will include HIPAA protected information.

Today's technology makes it is much easier and faster to share data electronically. But with the this ease and instant data share comes even more ways that HIPAA protected information can be shared inappropriately or even unintentionally. Treat electronic documents just as you would paper ones. Remember, once you hit "send" you can't stop the information from getting out.

A few tips to help you avoid HIPAA Violations

- Keep office doors closed when you are out.
- Turn HIPAA protected documents face down when you leave them on your desk.
- Take protected documents to the shred box on a regular basis.
- When outside of the office/home, carry protected documents in a closed bag and always lock your car if you leave any information in there.

A few final thoughts on HIPAA

When in doubt - don't!

If you stop to question that what you are about to do or say will be a violation of HIPAA regulations, stop.

Think carefully about this situation:

- Is the information you are about to share protected?
- Do you have permission to share information with the person you are communicating with?
- Still unsure? Consult with your Customer Service Associate for clarification and direction.

Oops! Have I committed a violation?

If you fear you may have committed a violation against HIPAA regulations, report it immediately to GT Independence.

There are certain steps that must be taken if a violation has been committed. If GT Independence feels that there has indeed been a violation he/she will begin the process of reporting the error.

Admitting to a mistake is often hard to do, but remember, your goal is to provide excellent service to your clients. Recognizing a violation and taking steps to prevent its recurrence is a very important step toward that goal.