

HIPAA FACTS FOR STUDENTS

What is HIPAA?

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 is a federal law. It establishes guidelines for the use and disclosure of protected health information referred to as PHI.

What is protected health information (PHI)?

PHI is defined as any patient specific information such as:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Name | Account number |
| Address | Any vehicle or other device serial number |
| Names of relatives | Photographic images |
| Birth date | Health plan beneficiary number |
| Telephone numbers | Fax numbers |
| Electronic e-mail addresses | Medical record number |
| Social Security Numbers | Any other unique identifying information |

How does HIPAA affect you as a student?

- Coversheets with confidential statements need to be used on all faxes
- Screens need to be placed out of public view with screensavers in use
- Patients will identify to whom their information can be discussed, including family
- All PHI must be placed in Shred-It containers
- Patient information should only be accessed if there is a **need to know**
- PHI is not to be discussed in public places such as nursing stations, waiting areas, cafeteria
- No PHI should be visible or accessible to the public.

What information can you release to the public regarding patients?

~ The following information about a patient can be released to individuals asking for the patient by name (unless they have “opted out of the directory”): patient location and condition in general terms.

~ To give out further information, the person must supply you with the patient’s personal passcode. The patient is given a passcode upon admission, which is the last 4 digits of the patient’s account number and can be found in the patient’s medical record. The patient is informed that anyone contacting the hospital and requesting personal information about the patient will need to supply the passcode.

~ The best policy to follow in giving out patient information is to let the patient give out the information if at all possible.

Can the patient decide what information regarding them can be given out?

The answer is yes; however, any requests go through the Facility Privacy Officer and are submitted in writing. The SMH Facility Privacy Officer (FPO) is Mary Hostetler and she can be reached at 268-7719. All privacy requests the patient makes are treated seriously; however, DO NOT agree to any privacy requests that the patient makes to you. Requests need to be made in writing with the FPO. Please consult the patient’s nurse for further direction.

Can a patient decide that NO information can be given out regarding them?

Yes; this request is called “opting out of the directory” and this information is flagged in Meditech. In this instance all callers and visitors requesting information regarding the patient are told, “I have no information about this patient.” The “opt out” request is always made in writing and the patient is told that no deliveries, including cards or flowers will be forwarded to them.

If you ever question how you should handle PHI, ASK the nursing staff, your instructor or the Facility Privacy Officer. We NEVER want to violate the HIPAA standards.

I have read and understand the above HIPAA Regulations regarding Patient Confidentiality and agree to follow them.

Date