This brochure provides basic information about the HIPAA Privacy Rule and how it affects the way we do our jobs.

What is HIPAA?

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a Federal law passed by Congress that protects the privacy of an individual's medical information and was implemented by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services.

What Does HIPAA Cover?

- Health care transactions like eligibility, authorizations, claims, and payments
- Onfidentiality and privacy of health information
- Security of electronic systems that transmit and receive health information

Who is Protected by HIPAA?

- Persons receiving health care services provided by Orange County employees
- Persons receiving health care services paid for by Orange County

What Information is Confidential?

Any information about the health of an individual, which identifies or can be used to identify the individual, is confidential. HIPAA applies to information communicated orally and in writing. It applies to information stored in hard copy or any electronic device or database, or that is transmitted through any electronic means.

I Don't Even Work Around Patients. Why Tell Me?

You do not have to work directly in patient care to be affected by HIPAA. If you work for the County, you may see patient information every day. For instance, if you work in a billing or an accounting office, you might not see the patients, but you will see information about them. That information is confidential. If you work in custodial services or maintenance, you may have access to locked offices that often contain confidential information about patients. If you walk through patient care areas on your way to your office, you may come in contact with our patients. HIPAA says we must keep information about our patients and clients confidential.

What About Casual Contact?

If you gain confidential information, even accidentally, in the course of performing your job duties or as a result of your employment relationship with the County, you must not share it. For example, if you see a friend at the County as a patient, you must not disclose that to anyone else — not to other friends, not to your family, not to your friend's family. Our patients have a legal right to privacy and, in your role as an employee, you have an obligation to maintain that privacy.

May I Share Information with a Co-Worker?

No. Not unless your co-worker has a need to know the information.

What do you Mean, "Need to Know?"

Your need to know confidential information is defined by the job you perform. If you must know the information to successfully perform your job duties, then you have a right to know the information. Your coworker, however, might not need to know the same information as you in order to do his or her job.

What Happens if I Release Confidential Information?

Violating the confidentiality and privacy of our patients and clients, even unintentionally, is serious and can result in discipline up to and including termination. In addition, the misuse of patient information is a violation of HIPAA and may result in fines and criminal penalties.

What Should I do if I see Confidential Information?

If you see confidential information left unattended or unsecured or you witness any practice that you think might result in release of confidential information, you should either report it to your immediate supervisor or to a HIPAA Coordinator. The important thing is that you tell someone so that the problem can be corrected.

What Else can I do to Help Comply with HIPAA?

There are things all of us can do to help protect the confidentiality and privacy of our clients and those who receive services from our programs. Treat all health information as confidential, whether you know

it because of your job or learn it accidentally.

- O Never access information that you are not specifically authorized to access.
- Never discuss confidential information with anyone, inside the County or outside the County, who is not specifically authorized to know the information.
- When you do share information with authorized persons, keep in mind who might overhear the conversation, and lower your voice.
- Make sure confidential information is secured when you step away from your work area.
- Move fax machines that are used to receive or transmit confidential information to secure locations away from public access.
- Always lock file cabinets that contain confidential information and lock doors to offices where confidential information is housed.
- Never throw confidential information away in trashcans or unlocked recycle bins. Always shred it and/or discard in locked recycle bins.

What are the Key Patient Rights Under HIPAA?

- Right to receive a notice of privacy practices (NPP) regarding their health information
- Right to access and obtain a copy of their protected health information (PHI)
- Right to an accounting of certain disclosures of PHI
- O Right to request a correction of PHI
- O Right to request restriction of uses and disclosures of their PHI
- O Right to file a privacy complaint

Be Familiar with the Privacy Policies for your Area of Responsibility

If you have questions or would like a copy of the Rule, please visit the County of Orange website at: www.ocgov.com/hipaa. You may contact the HCA HIPAA Coordinator by phone at (714) 834-4082 or by email at hipaa@ochca.com. You may contact the County HIPAA Privacy Officer by phone at (714) 834-5172 or by email at privacyofficer@ocgov.com.





