

# HIPAA

(Health Insurance Portability and  
Accountability Act)


Awareness Training for VIM  
Volunteers and Staff

# Training Objectives

To have every volunteer:


- ▶ Understand what **HIPAA** is.
- ▶ Know the meaning of Protected Health Information (**PHI**).
- ▶ Understand the significance of Treatment, Payment, and Operations (**TPO**) and why it is important to remember.
- ▶ Know the **consequences** for non-compliance with the law.
- ▶ Recognize the importance of making a **renewed commitment** to patient or client confidentiality!

# What is HIPAA?

- ▶ HIPAA is a law passed by congress in 1996.
  - ▶ HIPAA sets national standards for the protection of patient information.
  - ▶ HIPAA applies to healthcare providers, including hospitals, public health departments, medical professionals, insurance companies, labs, home care companies, and surgery centers.
  - ▶ HIPAA covers ALL forms of protected health information—oral, written and electronic.
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# Why are we, as volunteers, involved with HIPAA training?

It is everyone's responsibility to take the confidentiality of patient information seriously. Anytime a volunteer comes in contact with patient information (or any personal health information) written, spoken, or electronically transmitted, they become involved with some facet of the HIPAA regulations. It is for this reason that the law requires awareness training for all healthcare personnel, including volunteers.




# What is Protected Health Information (PHI)?

- ▶ Addresses
- ▶ Dates
- ▶ Telephone or FAX numbers
- ▶ Social Security numbers
- ▶ Patient or client account numbers
- ▶ Insurance plan numbers
- ▶ Vehicle information
- ▶ License numbers
- ▶ Medical equipment numbers
- ▶ Photographs
- ▶ Fingerprints
- ▶ Email addresses
- ▶ Internet addresses

Any health information that identifies someone or can be used to identify someone  
**MUST BE PROTECTED.**

# Sharing Patient Information


- ▶ HIPAA, under the Consent Rule, allows for the provider of care to use health information for **Treatment, Payment, and Operations (TPO)**.
  - ▶ Before HIPAA it was common to use patient information for other purposes and to share more than the **minimum necessary** information.
  - ▶ Now patients need to give prior authorization for the use of their health information for non-TPO purposes.
  - ▶ Under the **Minimum Necessary Rule**, volunteers should only have access to the information they need to fulfill their assigned duties.
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# What is TPO?

HIPAA allows us to share patient information for:

- ▶ Treatment (providing care to patients)
- ▶ Payment (getting paid for caring for patients)
- ▶ Operations (normal business activities such as quality improvement, training, auditing, customer service, and resolution of grievances.)

**If use of the information does not fall under one of these categories you must have the patient's signed authorization before sharing that information with anyone!**



# If Personal Health Information (PHI) is involved,



And ask yourself, “Does my sharing this information involve TPO for that patient?”

If the answer is NO, Don't pass it along unless you have been authorized to do so!!

This includes information you may see or hear as a volunteer about fellow volunteers, friends, and acquaintances receiving treatment. Sharing information for non-TPO purposes requires authorization from the patient involved.



# SCENARIOS

1. During the course of your regular volunteer duties, you discover that a neighbor of yours has just become a VIM patient.

**It's OKAY to:** Converse with the patient as you would normally do with other patients as part of your routine duties.

**It's NOT OKAY to:** Talk about the patient, including sharing the information with VIM staff or other volunteers, even though the patient has NOT authorized the release of that information.

**It's OKAY to:** Tell your neighbor (when you are alone) that his communication with VIM should be directly with the office and not through you.

# SCENARIOS

2. You are having lunch with a group of volunteer friends and someone makes the statement, “Did you know that Henry is being treated at VIM for his hernia?”

**It's OKAY to:** Politely stop the conversation and remind your fellow volunteer that sharing personal health information for non-TPO purposes is not something we do. A reminder to all that we need to be HIPAA-wise would be a very appropriate comment.

**It's NOT OKAY to:** Talk about any person's health information, without authorization, **EVEN WHEN AMONG FRIENDS.**

# What are the consequences of not complying with the law?

- ▶ It has always been against VIM policy to improperly share, use, or dispose of patient information in the wrong way. Under HIPAA, there are now fines and penalties for this.
- ▶ We treat privacy seriously, which is why every volunteer and team member is required to sign a confidentiality form.

## Why should we do this?

1. It's the right thing to do.
2. It's in keeping with the values of our organization.
3. Think how you would feel if it was information about you or a loved one.

# Providing for the security of patient information

## With computers:

- ▶ HIPAA says we must protect all patient information by:  
Properly signing on with assigned user names/passwords.
- ▶ Signing off of computers if walking away from the desk.
- ▶ Keeping IDs and passwords CONFIDENTIAL.
- ▶ Protecting computer screens from unwanted viewing.

## Through proper disposal of information:

- We have to handle and dispose of patient information carefully, such as using a shredder instead of throwing patient information away.
- With the use of e-mail and faxes: HIPAA says we must protect all patient information transmitted electronically.

# Remember to...

- ▶ ALWAYS STOP and ask yourself, should I be sharing this patient information? If it doesn't pertain to TPO, don't discuss it.
- ▶ Think of patient information about fellow volunteers, neighbors and acquaintances as protected information, not for sharing.
- ▶ Dispose of patient information by placing in appropriate shredding bins—never in an open wastebasket.
- ▶ Turn computer screens off if you leave your station for any reason.

**I AM HIPAA-WISE**

# HIPAA Awareness Quiz

Please click on the following link to test your HIPAA knowledge.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7ZSVTTW>