

Protect and Secure Employee Health Information

Maintaining and protecting employee health information continues to be a focus for many counties in compliance with HIPAA requirements.

An earlier Technical Update provided a checklist of some action items for major areas of an employer's operations, taking into account HIPAA and the other federal laws protecting health information.

An added checklist of action items is being provided for counties to maintain and protect employee health information.

Booklets

- ✓ If newsletters or regular communications to employees are used, put a reminder about the privacy notice in these documents as well.

Human Resources

- ✓ Make sure clerical and administrative staff have support from management, as they may have to turn down requests for information from more senior, front-line supervisors.
- ✓ Liability does not end when an employee terminates employment or retires – do not disclose former employees' health information without their written authorization.

- ✓ Recordkeeping is important – maintain separate files for health information from other information. Limit access to these files and keep them secure. Do not make notes about health conditions in the employee file.

Front-line supervisors

- ✓ Train front-line supervisors as much as HR staff. Untrained supervisors are at significant risk for employee confidentiality violations. Supervisors should be trained as to when they can and cannot have access to an employee's health information.
- ✓ Prohibit supervisors from downloading employee health information onto their computers, even if the information is related to employment functions.
- ✓ Prohibit supervisors from accessing HR electronic or paper filing systems.
- ✓ Do not refer to or rely on health information when preparing a performance evaluation

For more information, contact CTSI at 303-861-0507.