



Family Health Care Tips

HIPAA—What does it mean to you?

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Parents Reaching Out provides resources that focus on helping families make informed decisions about the care and education of their children. Keeping your family healthy means knowing how to navigate the health care system and talk with your doctor or other providers. We hope these tip sheets will give you the information you may need to access the best, most cost-effective medical and related services to meet the needs of your family.

Many families over the past few years have heard many professionals bring up “HIPAA”, but what is it? Well, first of all HIPAA stands for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act which came into effect in 1996. HIPAA put in place a privacy rule that guaranteed patients access to their medical records, gave them more control over how their private health information is used and disclosed, and provides recourse if the medical privacy policy is violated.

What does this mean if you are a parent? In most cases, provider’s offices will require your signature on a release form before they can communicate with other professionals involved in your child’s care.

Access of Medical Records: Parents should be able to see or request copies of their child’s medical records and request that mistakes be corrected. The providers should provide access to the child’s records within thirty days and can also charge for copies or sending out the records.

Notice of Privacy Practices: Healthcare providers must provide a “Notice of Privacy Practices” to the patient, or in this case parent, on how they may use personal medical information and their rights under HIPAA. Doctor’s, hospitals and other healthcare providers would generally provide the notice on the patient’s first visit. The patient or you the parent will be asked to sign or initial that you received a copy of the notice.

Can my child’s Doctor fax their medical information to other Doctor’s or insurance companies? Yes, the privacy rule does not prohibit a covered “covered entity” from faxing their health information. However the Doctor does need to make sure that they comply with the “minimum necessary” rule.

What is the “minimum necessary” rule? This privacy rule requires Doctor’s to limit the amount of information being disclosed. They should only provide enough private health information necessary to accomplish the issue involved. However his rule does not apply if a Doctor is disclosing information to another Doctor for treatment purposes.

Can my child’s Doctor discuss treatment information by email, phone, letters, etc.? Yes, as long the Doctor uses reasonable safeguards to protect your child’s information.

Can my child’s health information be released without my authorization? When a child’s health information is released without authorization it is usually used to support treatment or payment. In most cases the Doctor can discuss patient information for the purpose of treatment for the specific conditions only. Basically a Doctor could not discuss bowel problems with a Speech Language Pathologist unless it was related to the treatment.

What can I do if I feel there has been a violation? If you feel that your information was used or shared in a way that is not allowed or if you felt you didn’t the opportunity to exercise your rights you can file a complaint with your insurance provider. You can also file a complaint with the Government by contacting the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Civil Rights at 1-800-627-7748.



"Health Care Tips" are publications of Parents Reaching Out and developed under a grant from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Views expressed do not necessarily represent their policy and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services.