



Faxing Protected Health Information

We frequently use the fax machine to send and/ or request patient health information (PHI) to and from other health care providers.

The HIPAA Privacy Rule permits physicians and other members of the healthcare team to disclose PHI to other healthcare providers for treatment, payment, and healthcare operations. The rule also requires that we have appropriate safeguards in place to protect the privacy of the information we are sending or receiving through a fax machine.

Each individual working with our patient's health information is responsible for the confidentiality of the information. Imagine:

Instead of sending fax to the intended provider's office, you sent it to the patient's employer.

Instead of sending fax to the patient's physician with highly sensitive health information, you sent it to the fax number of a local TV station?

A misdirected fax breaches patient privacy by exposing their health information to an individual who has not been authorized to see their information.

All misdirected faxes must be reported to the HIPAA Privacy Office so that the breach may be investigated quickly and any required actions for reporting and notification can be taken.

By following a few basic tips when we fax patient health information, we can ensure the protection of our patient's privacy.

Fax Basics:

Your fax machine should be in a secure location so unauthorized individuals are not able to see sent/received information.

Always use a cover sheet that includes your name and contact information and our confidentiality statement

Do not include any PHI (name, DOB) on the cover sheet. This provides an additional layer of protection in the event the fax is sent to the wrong recipient.

Before Sending the Fax

Confirm that the number you have for the receiving party is correct.

Confirm in the display window that you have typed the number correctly – before you hit send.

Confirm that any preprogrammed fax numbers are still correct.

If you send a fax to the wrong recipient:

Notify your supervisor and Department Privacy Liaison immediately!

Attempt to retrieve all copies of the fax or ensure the recipient has appropriately destroyed the fax.

Complete the Breach Incident Form and submit to the HIPAA Privacy Office. Your supervisor and/or Privacy Liaison will be able to assist you with this.