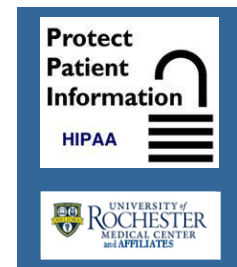


HIPAA HIGHLIGHTS

November 2024



Responding to Requests for Patient Records

The recently implemented federal **Information Blocking** rules prohibit HIPAA covered entities like URM & Affiliates from putting unnecessary roadblocks in the way of individuals or providers who have a reason or right to access patient records. While some requests for medical records require patient authorization, many do not; for example, requests for the purposes of treatment or payment do not require patient authorization. (See [HIPAA Policy P7.1](#)). **If you receive a request for records from a provider or health insurer for treatment or payment purposes, you should provide the records**, after verifying the requester's identity if and as appropriate. You may refer the request to your organization's Health Information Management (HIM) department, but often that incurs unnecessary delay.

When can I provide patient records to another provider without patient authorization?

Examples:

- If you refer a patient to a specialist, you can send them records regarding the referral.
- If a provider refers a patient to your office, you can share records related to the referral with that provider.
- If an external provider (not part of URM & Affiliates) requests records from your office because the provider is treating the patient, you can release the records based on a written request on letterhead from that provider.

How can I know that the request is legitimate?

Requests on letterhead of a provider or healthcare insurer are presumptively legitimate. For phone requests, if you recognize the requester because you have communicated with them before, you can assume the request is legitimate. If the requester is new to you, then you should verify his or her identity and authority as described in [HIPAA Policy P27](#). For example, you can call back a number independently verified via a phone directory or Google search, rather than the number given by a caller. If the telephone request is from a medical provider, you can ask the requester for unique clinical information concerning the patient, as verification of the provider's identity.

What about patient requests for access to their own records?

As noted in the June 2024 HIPAA Highlights, patients have a fundamental right to access their medical records, and HIPAA imposes strict timelines on the response of HIPAA covered entities. Enforcing this right has been a priority of the Office of Civil Rights for several years. Please refer to the [June 2024 HIPAA Highlights](#) for guidance on responding to patient access requests. Don't delay in responding to the request, or referring it to your organization's Health Information Management (HIM) office or your physician practice's Office Manager within one day of receipt.

For information on this or other HIPAA-related topics, please refer to [URM's HIPAA Intranet site](#) or contact your [Privacy Officer](#) or [HIPAA Security Official](#).