eZine

March 2003

OFFICE OF HEALTH CARE PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

HIPAA AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

What is HIPAA You Ask?

HIPAA is an acronym for the Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA), which was enacted in 1996, Public Law 104-91. At that time, Congress mandated Federal privacy protections for identifiable health information. Certain provisions in that law required the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish national standards to protect the confidentiality of identifiable health and medical information in health care records and electronic transactions, such as names, addresses, diagnoses, and all other personal and medical information related to health care records generally, and to patients, specifically.To comply with the Federal mandate, HHS published the Privacy Rule in December 2000. This rule set national standards for protecting health information as it pertains to covered entities, which ave been designated as health plans, health care clearinghouses, and health care providers who conduct certain health care transactions through electronic submissions.

The HIPAA Program leaders in the District of Columbia

Carolyn Graham, Deputy Mayor, for the Children, Youth, Families, and Elders, is the Chair of the HIPAA District of Columbia Executive Steering Committee. Contact number is 202 727-8001.

Gerry Roth, Office of Health Care Privacy and Confidentiality (OHCPC), is the District's Privacy Official, and will facilitate the request for inquires on individuals Protected Health Information (PHI) and complaints. Contact number is 202 727-8001.

Marian Prescod is the Program Director of the HIPAA DC Program Management Office (PMO). Contact number is 202 727-5072.

The District of Columbia is a "Hybrid Entity"

The HIPAA Privacy Final Rule coined the term hybrid entity for organizations to use to designate that there are health care components included within its organizational structure.
The District of Columbia government is considered a covered entity and a hybrid entity, as it has health care agencies and business units, as well as non-health care agencies. The hybrid entity concept extends to organizations, such as insurance companies, which have many product lines, including health insurance.

The affected District agencies are listed below:

Agency	Health Care Component/Activity
Department of Health (DOH)	Medical Assistance Administration (MAA); Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration (APRA); HIVAIDS;

	Public Health Labs; School health information;
Department of Human Services (DHS)	JB Johnson Nursing Home);
Department of Mental Health (DMH)	Saint Elizabeth's Hospital; Community Services Administration (CSA); Department of Mental Health Authority (DMHA);
Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)	Foster Care Program (FCP);
Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS)	Emergency Medical Services (EMS);
Department of Corrections (DOC)	Correctional Treatment Facility;
Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)	Police and Fire Clinic;
District of Columbia Office of Aging (DCOA)	Washington Center for Aging Services (WCAS);
District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)	Special Education Students

The PMO's HIPAA Compliance and Implementation Strategy

The PMO has established project offices in each agency to execute compliance and implementation plans. The PMO's HIPAA implementation strategy includes reviews of the policies, processes, procedures, and information systems, of each agency's health care components, with respect to protected health information (PHI).
The PMO, under the direction of Marian Prescod, has deployed project teams to all District health care components to work with their staff to design HIPAA-compliant processes for all of their business units. The project teams will review the policies and procedures currently in place, and make any necessary modifications. The project teams are also responsible for training agency staff in the affected agencies. The project teams consist of project managers, policy analysts, system administrators, and training coordinators. The policy analysts will make judgments on agency HIPAA policy, and issue recommendations for policy modifications, when needed, and will draft HIPAA policy when there is none in place. As a part of their review, the policy analysts will focus on, though not exclusively, the following:
• An agency/business units' relationship rules and practices;
• An agency/business units' privacy practices and notices;
• An agency/business units' handling of privacy complaints; and
• An agency/business units' manner of handling disclosures.
• An agency/business unit's information security practices.
• An agency/business unit's practices in standardizing its Transactions Code Sets and Identifiers (TCI).

The PMO's HIPAA Project Goals

The HIPAA DC PMO has set forth the following goals for HIPAA implementation and compliance:
• Develop HIPAA compliance initiatives for all District health care components;
• Advise District agencies on HIPAA requirements and the impact on District government operations;
• Develop an action and implementation plan for meeting HIPAA mandates;
• Provide District agencies with tools, templates, and processes to implement HIPAA compliance strategies; and
• Establish a cross-functional advisory team to ensure that all pertinent disciplines are represented and included in formulating solutions.

Important Dates to Remember:
•Privacy Compliance Date 4/14/03
•TCI Compliance Date

10/16/03Upcoming Events
•Training Starts 4/1/03

For more information on items contained in this news letter, Please contact:
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