

Important Information on DHS HIPAA Privacy Policies and Procedures

"HIPAA" is the short name for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. Part of that Act provides for the safeguarding of each individual's personal health information or "PHI." The federal Department of Health and Human Services ("HHS") has issued a "Privacy Rule," effective April 14, 2003. The Privacy Rule details when and how the privacy safeguards apply, and the administrative requirements "covered entities" such as DHS must follow. DHS has adopted privacy policies and procedures in order to comply with the Privacy Rule. All members of DHS's workforce will be trained on those DHS policies and procedures. Training will be done in a manner suitable to the employee's role within the agency and the extent of the employee's involvement with PHI. Every member of the workforce, including volunteers and trainees, should keep in mind the following key points from DHS policies and procedures:

- DHS has issued a "notice of privacy practices" stating how it will use and disclose an individual's PHI. The notice will be available in paper and electronic formats.
- DHS must obtain written agreements from its contractors or "business associates" reasonably assuring that their activities will meet HIPAA privacy requirements.
- Normally, an individual's written authorization should be obtained before PHI may be used by DHS or disclosed to others.
- When PHI is used or disclosed without a written authorization, the use or disclosure should only be of the minimum PHI necessary to accomplish the purpose for which the use or disclosure is being made.
- An individual has the rights to access the individual's own PHI; to request limitations on its use and disclosure, including restricting the persons to whom disclosure may be made; to request amendment of the individual's PHI; and, to request an accounting of disclosures made without written authorization or other legal authority. DHS must maintain records of those disclosures and keep the records for six years.
- An individual who believes his or her rights under the Privacy Rule have been violated has a right to make a complaint to the DHS or to the Secretary of HHS.
- DHS has designated a Privacy Officer responsible for developing and implementing privacy policies and procedures, which provide for Division and Office Privacy Coordinators responsible for providing information, receiving complaints and responding to inquiries.
- Both civil and criminal penalties may apply if privacy violations occur.

Please keep a copy of this document for ready reference, sign and date a copy below and return it to the person who distributes your paycheck. Thank you for helping DHS achieve HIPAA compliance.

Signature

Please print Name clearly

Date

Division / Unit