

Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

Ask a HIPAA Expert: HIPAA Is Not Child's Play

Question: Can we fax absentee notes and forms authorizing the administration of medications directly to schools or camps?

Vermont Subscriber

Answer: No, except in an emergency, say Drs. **Charles Scott** and **Benjamin Rosenblum** with Children's Health Associates in Trenton, N.J. These forms would likely be faxed to a central administrative office where many people may have access to them, and that could easily create a violation of medical privacy.

"We prefer that you give these forms to the patient or parent either in the office or by mail. They can forward the forms to the school," they say. Scott and Rosenblum say the least preferable choice would be to fax the forms to the parent, because of the possibility of faxing to the wrong number. "We feel that it is permissible to fax such forms to a school if the child is at school and the school needs immediate permission to administer a medicine or to let the child back into classes. If you fax an absentee note to the school, we suggest that you note only that the child may return to school and not give a specific diagnosis," they say. For example, write that "Johnny is medically cleared to return to school," and disclose only the minimum necessary information on any of these notes, they say.