

Eli's Rehab Report

Reader Question: School Nurses Aren't Immune to HIPAA

Question: A school nurse recently called our office to request a patient's physical therapy record because she needed it to clear him for the football team. Can we give the nurse this information, or is that a HIPAA violation?

Answer: If someone other than the patient himself (or his parents) requests the documents, you should clear the request with him before you hand out the information. Although the nurse may tell you that the patient asked her to get the records from you, you shouldn't send the patient's file to the school without the patient's permission.

Your best bet is to ask the patient or his parents to write you a letter specifically granting you authorization to send the file to the school.

In the future, if a student athlete comes to your PT practice, you should ask him up front, "Who is authorized to receive your medical records?" Because there is a good chance that the school will request the file, you'll already have authorization in-hand when the school requests it.