

Eli's Hospice Insider

Privacy Compliance : 2 HIPAA Tips Help You Stay in the Clear

If you're not doing this, your hospice could be at risk.

HIPAA is definitely heating up. These two simple strategies can ensure you've covered the compliance bases.

1. Don't assume it's OK to disclose PHI to the patient's significant others. Instead, as part of admission, ask the patient to identify the individuals to whom it's OK to disclose his protected health information, suggests attorney **Meg Pekarske**, with Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren in Madison, Wis. It's also a good idea to document the identified individuals and regularly review this with the patient. And limit what you do share with the identified individuals to their involvement in the patient's care, she adds.

2. Implement training involving common privacy scenarios. "One problem with HIPAA training is that it's usually a list of dos and don'ts," says attorney **Cynthia Stamer** in Dallas. Yet, "it doesn't teach skills for handling various situations that come up."

Example: Suppose a neighbor drops by and asks the hospice nurse how the patient is doing. One way to handle that is for the nurse or other hospice caregiver to seek consent from the patient in some manner rather than providing the visitor information, Stamer suggests. "For example, you might say to the patient: 'Julie, why don't you give her an update, she's here to see you, not me.'"