

OASIS Alert

Test Your OASIS Savvy ...

True or False? Now that the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act privacy regulations are in effect, clinicians generally can't share information with a patient's family and friends.

A. False. "HIPAA does not cut off all communications between providers and the families and friends of patients," instructs attorney **Richard M. Campanelli** with the **HHS Office for Civil Rights**. In a May 20 letter clarifying the privacy regs, Campanelli explains that providers can share needed information with the patient's family and friends "as long as the patient does not object." The privacy rule also allows providers to notify family members or other responsible persons about the patient's general condition or location, unless the patient objects when given the opportunity, he advises.

Editor's Note: To see the letter, go to www.hhs.gov/ocr/Healthcare-Provider-letter.pdf. For further information go to www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/ and click on "Your Frequently Asked Questions on Privacy" and choose the subcategory "Disclosure to family and friends."