

## OASIS Alert

### Training Tips: HOW TO HANDLE PRIVACY COMPLAINTS

How well you train your front line staff to handle complaints about OASIS or HIPAA privacy issues may make the difference between an uncomfortable moment and a lawsuit.

The **HHS Office for Civil Rights** predicts it will receive nearly 22,000 medical privacy complaints each year.

Your front line employees - who often represent the first point of contact between your organization and your patients - can go a long way to help soothe irate patients ready to file a privacy complaint, reports **Suzy Buckovich**, a managing consultant with **IBM Business Consulting Services** in Bethesda, MD.

By properly training your staff on your workflow procedures and processes for handling privacy complaints, you can help "set the tone for resolution," she says. Buckovich offers these four vital pieces of information to prime your staff to process privacy grievances:

1. Know the contact person. Employees need to know who ultimately is responsible for receiving privacy complaints within their organizations. Tell them how to contact the appropriate person to report a privacy complaint or file one of their own, advises Buckovich.
2. Know the investigative process. Employees should understand how the investigative process will go, once a complaint has been submitted, recommends Buckovich. For example, will the compliance officer or someone in human resources handle privacy complaints? Don't let employees think complaints are dumped into some bottomless pit - give them a sense of what will happen so they may be better prepared to face angry patients.
3. Know the response process. Employees must know the typical response procedure for all received complaints. Inform employees of what patients should expect in terms of follow-up communications: letter, phone call or visit, Buckovich says. This awareness lets employees satisfy patients who are eager to know how and when they might hear from your organization.
4. Know the documentation. Instruct employees that their understanding and cooperation is vital in tracking and processing each complaint. Explain that all complaints are entered into a privacy log to help you track and note trends among the types of complaints received. Remind employees that you take privacy complaints very seriously, states Buckovich.