

Health Information Compliance Alert

Health Information News AHIMA PUTS PRIVACY CONCERNS IN WRITING

Deeply troubled by two recent events that question both the Department of Defense and Department of Health and Human Services about the agencies' attention to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, the American Health Information Management Association Jan. 6 put pen to paper to spell out their concerns.

AHIMA cited two incidents it considered troubling: 1) A Dec. 24, 2002 loss of thousands of health records by TriWest, a DOD contractor; and 2) the failure of the HHS to issue a final notice for HIPAA security regulations.

"Both incidents raise serious concerns regarding the willingness and commitment of the federal government to make this a key priority at a time when both the healthcare industry and the federal government are trying to address the need for and build a national healthcare information infrastructure," wrote AHIMA Vice President of Policy and Governmental Relations Dan Rode.

Worried that the two "incidents" raise questions about the message DOD and HHS are sending to the public, Rode added that he and AHIMA hope to see the incidents addressed quickly this year. Rode then volunteered AHIMA's services to facilitate the release of the security rule regulations.

To read the letter, go to http://www.ahima.org/dc/AHIMA_Letter_Secretaries_HHS_DOD.html.

- Utah Gov. Michael Leavitt (R) announced Jan. 21 in his "State of the State" speech his plan to create a new biotechnology/human genetics project.

The project, known as GenData, will collect genetic data from state residents on a volunteer basis in order to produce a database to aid researchers in discovering new treatments for diseases such as cancer.

In his speech, Leavitt said the database had already produced important discoveries he said could not have been made "anywhere else in the world."

"With proper foresight and care, the database could become the means both of ridding the human family of disease as well as enhancing Utah's economic prowess in biotechnology," he said.