

# Health Information Compliance Alert

## Quality First: Don't Skimp on Your Health IT

**Ask these seven questions of your vendor upfront before buying into a plan.**

If your practice-compliance arrangement was put together after a cursory reading of the HIPAA rules on the HHS website, then you may want to rethink your system. Oftentimes, the OCR advice after a breach suggests that if a plan was in place beforehand, a fine could have been avoided.

**Remember:** A superficial understanding of health IT and HIPAA isn't going to protect you or your practice should you experience violation. "A robust compliance plan must include relevant, mandatory policies and procedures, as well as an evolving and up-to-date risk analysis in order to maintain compliance," explains **John E. Morrone, Esq**, a partner at Frier Levitt Attorneys at Law in Pine Brook, NJ.

**Qualified personnel only.** CMS keeps upping the bar on CEHRT with the hope the new advancements will improve healthcare, but if you're not in the know, the new ideologies can impede the care you give, your office workflow, and your bottom line.

"As technology advances and more and more healthcare data pours into the system, it becomes even more critical that covered entities and business associates have experienced and qualified technology providers supporting their compliance efforts," warns Morrone. "The emergence of technologies such as telehealth and wearables create additional challenges for IT professionals. Moreover, the ever increasing use of 'patient portals' that allow patients direct access to their medical records create additional entry points for unauthorized access to protected health information."

If you are in the market for a new vendor, consider asking these questions to ensure your partnership is HIPAA-compliant:

- What administrative, physical, and technical safeguards do you have in place to protect ePHI?
- What is your HIPAA-compliance record?
- Are you willing to enter into a Business Associate Agreement?
- What tools and services do you offer? (24/7 customer service, audit assistance, authentication advice, education, and more)
- What kind of training and vetting do your employees undergo?
- What are your policies, procedures, and protocols for everyday HIPAA compliance but also in case of a breach?
- What is the overall cost?

**Consider this:** One size does not fit all in the case of technical support. Look for a vendor that meets the demands of your practice and your wallet.