

Health Information Compliance Alert

Reader Question: THE PARENT TRAP

Question: Our office needs to obtain an authorization to release medical information about one of our minor patients; however, the child's parents share custody. Do they both need to sign the authorization, or is it HIPAA-compliant to get just one of their signatures?

- Wisconsin subscriber

Answer: You do not have to obtain both signatures, advises consultant **Jason Levine** with Joliet, IL's Murer Consultants. "If [the parents] are legally authorized to share custody," then either signature will work, he says.

The Bottom Line: Joint custody does not add any legal wrinkles to your authorization process, Levine explains. However, if a parent has sole custody, then only that parent's signature can be used to authorize disclosures, he reminds.