

## Health Information Compliance Alert

### READER QUESTIONS: BEWARE FAXING ABSENTEE FORMS TO SCHOOLS

**Question:** Can we fax absentee notes and forms authorizing the administration of medications directly to schools or camps?

Tennessee Subscriber

**Answer:** No, except in the event of an emergency, say Drs. **Charles Scott** and **Benjamin Rosenblum** with **Children's Health Associates** in Trenton, NJ. These forms would be faxed to a central administrative office where many people may have access to them, and that could easily create a violation of confidentiality.

"We prefer that you give these forms to the patient or parent either in the office or by mail. They can forward the forms to the school," they advise. Scott and Rosenblum say the least preferable choice would be to fax the forms to the parent because of the possibility of faxing to a wrong number. "We feel that it is permissible to fax such forms to a school if the child is at school and the school needs immediate permission to administer a medicine or to let the child back into classes.

If you fax an absentee note to the school, we suggest that you note only that the child may return to school and not give a specific diagnosis," they tell **Eli**. For example, write that "Johnny is medically cleared to return to school," and disclose only the minimum necessary information on any of these notes, they recommend.