

Health Information Compliance Alert

Reader Questions: Don't Withhold Patients' Medical Records

Question: A few of our patients have asked for a full, unedited copy of their medical records. While we know we must provide the record, we are uncomfortable with handing out full copies without any counseling on how to interpret the information

in the record. Does the privacy rule allow us to hold back any information that could cause harm to the patient?

Alabama subscriber

Answer: It depends, says **Debbie Larios**, an attorney with Miller & Martin in Nashville. Some states allow you to disclose more information than others, she points out.

Important: You should not withhold information from patients simply because you aren't sure how they'll interpret that information, Larios stresses. If you are concerned about how your patients will take the information in their medical record,

attach a cover sheet that recommends they consult their physician if they have any questions.

The bottom line: The only time you should hold back patients' information is if you feel the patient is likely to hurt herself or another person based on the data in their medical record, Larios says.