

Health Information Compliance Alert

READER QUESTIONS: LET'S PARTY

Question: One of our visiting physicians is retiring and we would like to invite his patients to his retirement party. Can we provide a list of patient names and addresses to his regular staff?

- Indiana subscriber

Answer: No, insists **Kevin Troutman**, attorney with Fisher & Phillips in New Orleans. "If the physician wants to invite his patients, it's better to use his own list," he says.

Providers are allowed to share some information, but it can only be for treatment, payment or operations - and this situation represents none of those, he reminds.

Tip: Have physicians use their own lists or your patients might worry that you're releasing their confidential information without their authorization, he warns.

The Bottom Line: You shouldn't hand out your patient lists, but you can go another route to let the physician's patients know of the retirement party. "Put something in the newspaper that says the physician is retiring and that all his current and former patients are invited to a reception," Troutman suggests.