

Health Information Compliance Alert

Reader Questions: Vendor Should Certify Practice's System

Question: What's the best way to verify that our new practice management system is HIPAA compliant?

Texas subscriber

Answer: Contact your practice management system (PMS) vendor to see if the system has been tested and is ready to go. It's the vendor's responsibility to a practice to have the PMS certified and working correctly "before the vendor actually sends them the software," says **Jeff Gardner**, senior programmer analyst with Accounting Systems Technology Inc., a PMS vendor in Casselberry, Fla.

Vendors gather as much information from the clinical side as possible before they run their tests with payers. Their electronic files get sent back with a report citing any problems. The software is considered certified once those problems are fixed. Certified PMS vendors don't anticipate any format glitches when practices begin using their software, Gardner says, but proper functioning will be "dependent on [coders and billers] making sure they enter the correct information."

Tip: An easy way to verify that your software is ready is by visiting the PMS directory Web site at www.hipaa.org/pmsdirectory. The site is sponsored by a coalition of national physician associations and lists most of the practice-software programs, indicating which programs have been tested and can support HIPAA transactions.