

HIPAA Requirements for Destruction of Protected Health Information



WHAT IS HIPAA?

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a Federal law to prevent abuses of personal health information (PHI), including unauthorized access. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and it is enforced by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights.

WHO IS A "COVERED ENTITY"?

Institutions that must comply with HIPAA are called Covered Entities. Covered Entities include any and all organizations or individuals who retain or collect health related information. This includes larger institutions such as hospitals, medical centers, and insurance companies.

There are also **SMALL COVERED ENTITIES** such as:

- Doctors - Dentists - Chiropractors
- Psychiatrists - Psychologists
- Counselors - Urgent Care Centers - Billing Centers
- Physical Therapists - Collection Agencies

Technically, **EVERY EMPLOYER** in the United States with completed health insurance applications or injury reports on file is considered a **SMALL COVERED ENTITY** under HIPAA.

According to HIPAA, **EVERY COVERED ENTITY** regardless of size, must have documented policies defining reasonable measures they have instituted to prevent unauthorized access.

DESTROYING ALL DISCARDED PATIENT INFORMATION IS A VERY IMPORTANT REQUIREMENT OF HIPAA.

PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION ... DEFINED

Protected Health Information (PHI) is the classification which the HHS has given to personal patient information for which unauthorized release is now a criminal offense.

PHI includes: Diagnosis - Prescription Billing Information - Medical History Therapeutic Advice - Notes - Appointment Memo - Phone Messages - Sign-in Logs Voice Recorded Transcripts - X-rays and Other Images - Insurance Information Claim Forms - Copies of Forms

DISCARDING PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

EVERY COVERED ENTITY HAS THE NEED TO COLLECT AND DISCARD PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION. CASUALLY DISCARDING PHI IN THE TRASH IS NO LONGER REASONABLE OR ACCEPTABLE.

It is only a matter of time before the Office of Civil Rights, Auditors and the Media start testing the effectiveness of HIPAA. Consumer awareness and interest in privacy protection is at an all time high. It is the reason laws such as HIPAA are being created and enforced.

To ensure compliance with HIPAA, many **COVERED ENTITIES** now destroy all discarded information.

THIS ALSO INCLUDES INFORMATION ON COMPUTERS. DELETING INFORMATION DOES NOT ERASE IT. IT MUST BE DESTROYED.



NO OFFICE IS TOO SMALL TO BENEFIT FROM USING A SHREDDING FIRM.

Many **SMALL COVERED ENTITIES** think they are too small to use a shredding service, when in reality it is the most economical and convenient way to ensure compliance.

In a small office, staff is busy. Dropping discarded PHI in a secure bin, is a lot easier and more economical than having busy staff feed single sheets of paper through a shredder one at a time.

A **SECURE SHREDDING FIRM** is very inexpensive insurance.

You may only need weekly or even monthly service. You may be surprised by how little it can cost. And, you can get as many or as few collection stations as you want.

TURN TO A NAID MEMBER FOR HELP!

Using a Secure Shredding Service is the preferred method for **COVERED ENTITIES** to destroy Protected Health Information!

NAID (National Association for Information Destruction) is the trade association for the secure shredding industry. One of its main purposes is to demand high professional and ethical standards of its members.

Simply put, NAID Members are the secure shredding industry's professionals.



OUTSOURCING DOCUMENT DESTRUCTION IS THE MOST ACCEPTED ALTERNATIVE!

Office shredders ...

- Must be replaced often
- Are messy
- Can't take staples and clips
- Can't handle film and computer disks
- Take time away from the real office work
- Are not used consistently by employees (*creating a high-risk situation*)

As a Better Alternative Consider Using a NAID Member ...

- Provides convenient security collection containers (*making it easy and convenient for employees to use*)
- Destroys it fast, whether it is 10 pounds or 1,000 boxes
- Shreds staples, clips, film and CDs with no problem
- Frees employees to do their real job
- Is cost effective. The smaller the office, the more economical the service.

REASONS TO ACT NOW

POTENTIAL FUTURE AUDITS - When you are asked to show what you are doing to comply with HIPAA, demonstrating that you use a service to destroy all discarded paperwork can be a significant signal to auditors that you are taking HIPAA seriously.

PEACE OF MIND - Why jeopardize everything to save pennies? Your clients turn to you because you are the professional. You need to turn to the information disposal professionals to help protect your practice and your patients.

HOW IT WORKS

- 1) The NAID Member provides collection containers for confidential materials (or you can use your own)
- 2) On a schedule that fits your needs, the NAID Member collects the confidential material for destruction.
- 3) Afterward, you receive documentation to establish that you are complying with the new privacy requirements.

IT IS FAST, SECURE, ECONOMICAL, EFFORTLESS AND THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

CONTACT the company listed here to learn more about how a secure shredding service can help you economically meet your HIPAA requirements.

