

Compliance Education

HIPAA Tip Sheet: Safeguarding Against a HIPAA Breach in the Field

Visiting Patients/Members

- Never bring family/friends or other non-VNS Health employees into patient/member homes
 - If you need accompaniment to a patient/member home, ask your manager for an escort
- Never allow family/friends to take you to or from patient/member homes—patient/member names and addresses are PHI

Paper

- Avoid carrying paper lists, logbooks or planners with PHI into the field
 - If you must carry these documents, include only the minimum necessary needed for that day
- Keep paper PHI in a folder in a secure compartment of your bag
- Ensure that unauthorized persons do not view PHI during the course of a visit
- Keep careful account of all paper PHI to avoid loss
- Never discard paper PHI in the trash—always shred or place in VNS Health shredding bins

Talking

- Avoid any discussion of patient/member PHI with any unauthorized persons including other patients, neighbors, etc.
- When discussing patient/member PHI, always speak in hushed tones; use private areas whenever possible
- Always ask the patient/member permission before conducting a visit in the presence of others including privately hired Personal Care workers
- Only share PHI with VNS Health HHAs and other VNS Health staff on a need-to-know basis

Electronic Devices

- Be sure to retrieve and secure all VNS Health issued devices when moving between locations
- If traveling by car, secure VNS Health issued devices in a bag out-of-sight or in a locked car trunk
- Avoid carrying VNS Health issued devices in your hands or in your pockets while in transit – always keep them in a secured bag
 - Carrying electronics in your hands or pockets can lead to inadvertent loss e.g. your VNS Health issued phone may fall out of your pocket
- Always keep device screens private especially while in transit or in public places
- Never take unauthorized photographs of patients/members
 - If you must photograph a patient/member for a job-related task (i.e. wound care), only use VNS Health approved platforms; never share images with unauthorized persons or on social media
- Never use your personal cellphone or other electronic devices for work-related activities unless permitted by the VNS Health [BYOD Policy](#)

Reminder: If your VNS Health issued device is lost/stolen, inform both your manager and the IT Service Desk at (212) 290-3555.

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For routine HIPAA questions, please contact the HIPAA and Privacy Team at their email:

HIPAA@vnshealth.org

Report potential violations via web at www.vnshealth.ethicspoint.com or

via **VNS Health Compliance Hotline at 1-888-634-1558**