



Compliance Education

HIPAA Tip Sheet for Behavioral Health Programs

We share information daily with others who are responsible for patient care. It is often difficult to know **how** to do this while protecting the patient's privacy. **BEST Practice tips for Behavioral Health program staff are listed:**

DO NOT:

- Speak about patients in the home or presence of other patients
- Allow patient information to be viewed in public areas e.g. coffee shop, deli, subway, etc.
- Leave client information openly displayed at your home either on paper, VNS Health laptop or phone
- Allow family/ friends to take you to and from a patient's home or invite them into patient's home
- Leave voicemail messages for patients without their permission
- Send any patient documentation or notes to your personal laptop or phone
- Take pictures of patients or share them on your personal phone, laptop, or social media

Be Thoughtful and protect an individual's Protected Health Information [PHI] when:

- Working with patient groups or with family members or others in community
- Carry only **paper PHI needed each day and eliminate patient identifiers**; Keep all paper containing PHI in a secure bag or backpack especially when traveling
- **Whenever possible**, store PHI on your VNS Health electronic devices rather than on paper

Verification MUST DO's before disclosing PHI:

- If someone calls for information, verify that the caller is authorized to obtain patient information
- Verify fax numbers and use a confidential fax cover sheet on all faxes
- Obtain written authorization for disclosing PHI outside of Treatment, Payment, or Operations. Sensitive information requires a higher level of approval e.g. HIV, mental health, substance use treatment
- Encrypt emails sent outside of VNS Health by (1) typing ENCRYPTME in "Subject" line or (2) clicking Options>Permission>Encrypt-Only

Please Remember: Maintain client privacy even when you are no longer a VNS Health employee

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

HIPAAandPrivacy.Team@vnshealth.org

Report potential violations via web at www.vnshealth.ethicspoint.com or
via **VNS Health Compliance Hotline** at **1-888-634-1558**