

McLean, Koehler, Sparks & Hammond

Certified Public Accountants/Business Consultants

Physician Services

Confidentiality assessment checklist

Confidentiality is a big issue that medical providers face all the time. Here is a checklist that provides a method for determining which confidentiality areas you may need to address.

- 1. Upon arrival the patients aren't asked to write the nature of their illness/complaint on a sign-in sheet viewable by other patients.
- 2. Conversations aren't audible outside any exam/treatment room
- 3. When patients check in at the office after their visit, they're not within the hearing of other patients.
- 4. Telephone calls of a clinical nature (prescriptions called in, test results) aren't made within the hearing of patients.
- 5. Providers don't take clinical calls while in with other patients.
- 6. Providers don't discuss clinical information in an area where other patients may overhear the conversation.
- 7. The daily appointment schedule isn't posted in the view of patients.
- 8. Medical records are maintained in a secure area, accessible only to staff.
- 9. Staff members receive training in handling authorizations to release medical records in conformance with federal and state laws.
- 10. All patient-initiated record releases are authorized in writing and verified by the patient's signature.
- 11. By policy, staff may access medical records only on a "need to know" basis (nurse is caring for patient; clerk is processing the bill, etc.).
- 12. A senior member of the staff is responsible for verifying the authenticity of any search warrant or subpoena involving release of information from a medical record prior to carrying it out.
- 13. A record retention policy is in effect.
- 14. Office policy prohibits recycling and requires shredding of discarded patient or clinical information.
- 15. Policy prohibits removing original medical records from the office.
- 16. Only urgent clinical information is transmitted via fax.
- 17. No unencrypted, unsecured patient information is available over the Internet.
- 18. Medical record policies and procedures are developed or revised with input from qualified legal counsel.
- 19. Staff members sign "confidentiality agreements" at time of hire and annually thereafter.
- 20. A written confidentiality policy is in effect with sanctions noted for noncompliance.
- 21. Passwords are used with electronic medical information systems.
- 22. Access to electronic information is deleted upon a staff resignation.

The areas above that you couldn't check off this list likely are areas that should be addressed. Call our offices for assistance on how you can improve your practice's confidentiality procedures.

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