

West Virginia Executive Branch Privacy Tip of the Week

Lost In Translation

Question:

Sometimes when I am trying to help someone over the phone, I cannot understand what the person is saying because they speak softly, or have an accent that is unfamiliar to me. Is there some way that I can make sure that I have heard them correctly and verify that their information is accurate?

Answer:

This is a great question because it is very important to confirm that the personally identifiable information (PII) your office collects is accurate. Inaccurate PII can have serious consequences for individuals, especially when that information is used for critical purposes. When you are collecting information from someone, take all reasonable precautions to ensure accuracy.

For example, if you are collecting prescription information and the caller does not know the correct dosages off the top of their head, ask them to call back with their medicines in hand. When you are asking for PII, be polite and take the time to ensure the client understands what you are asking for.

An excellent way to make certain you and your caller are on the same page is to read the number or spelling of PII back to them (as long as your call is not being overheard by others). Asking to verify information is a good way to politely double-check yourself. Also, this allows a person to correct any mistakes directly and at the time a file is created.

If you have any concerns about the accuracy of the PII you're using, please contact your Privacy Officer to discuss ways to improve the accuracy and respect individual rights.