

West Virginia Executive Branch Privacy Policy: Individual Rights

Accuracy of Third Party Data Sources

Question:

How can I minimize harm if I receive inaccurate information?

Answer:

When we obtain personal information , (PI), from third parties, we must always be careful to consider the accuracy of the information. Third party data suppliers generally do not guarantee the accuracy of the records they provide. Databases containing public records, telephone directory information, Internet-sourced information, and even consumer reports often contain inaccurate or out-of-date information.

Given that errors do occur, it is up to each Department to minimize the possible harm that might come from relying on an incorrect record. Recognizing that errors exist is the first step. Other ways to minimize the possible harm from inaccuracies include:

- ✓ Checking online data source file dates, to confirm that you are using the most current file updates,
- ✓ Verifying negative information against multiple data sources,
- ✓ Verifying aggregated online information with original public records filing, or
- ✓ Contacting the data supplier to confirm any questionable information.

The likelihood of errors increases when individuals have common names, or when the same name is used by multiple people in a household. (For example, when a father and son have the same name, their records are often mixed.) Similarly, victims of identity theft often have great difficulty correcting their personal information across all of the third party data compilers.

If an individual alleges that there is an error in third party information, be sure to refer that person to the Privacy Officer so that an investigation can be conducted. Understanding that errors do exist can go a long way to helping treat people's PI with the respect it deserves!