

West Virginia Executive Branch Privacy Tip

Question:

The (HIPAA) Privacy Rule provides Federal protection for the privacy of health information. Why is health privacy important?

Answer:

Because improper use and disclosure of protected health information could:

- **Impact your health care**

A 13-year old daughter of a hospital employee had access to a list of patient names and phone numbers when visiting her mother at work. As a joke, the girl called the patients and informed them they had been diagnosed with HIV.

- **Impact your personal life**

A hospital clerk took the treatment records of three patients to a local bar where he discussed the records with others. The patients' confidentiality was breached and they were awarded \$2.3 million by a jury.

- **Impact your professional life**

An historically good employee was fired after his employer learned of the employee's positive test for a genetic illness that could lead to loss of work time and increased insurance costs.

- **Impact your financial status**

A banker who also served on his county's health board cross referenced his banking customers with patient information. He called due mortgages of anyone suffering from cancer.

Source: Office for Civil Rights – Privacy Summary Rule and www.healthprivacy.org