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Many call centers engage in providing hospital answering service to patients and doctors. Their call experts deliver precise and appropriate information to patients when their doctors are unavailable. But, not all medical answering service providers comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The act was put into action by the US Congress in 1996, but its active enforcement was started in 2011. Any medical organization or service should abide by the following HIPAA rules:

- Keeping medical records of patients confidential.

- Improving the efficiency of health care system by computerizing medical data and bills.

- Training every member involved in health care provision about HIPAA policies and procedures.

Being a part of the health care industry, a hospital answering service also needs to follow these rules.

Privacy of patient information

The HIPAA stipulates that a patient's medical and personal information is a confidential data that should not be shared with anybody. This information is termed as Protected Health Information (PHI).

Some examples of PHI are as follows:

- Patient's name, age, address, phone number, and email address.

- Patient's medical records, diagnosis reports, x-rays, and prescription.

- Billing records.

As per HIPAA, PHI should be protected by every possible means by the hospital staff or any organization involved in health care services. Yet, PHI can be used and shared for the purpose of treatment of the patient or payment of health care bills. It can also be used for other medical-related activities such as training or in situations where disclosure is required by the law.

Security and computerization of information

Computerization of any data makes its handling easy and efficient. The HIPAA implies that every medical information, including medical records and bills, should be computerized. It also implies that this information should be protected from the people who do not have the right to use or share it. As per HIPAA, a patient's PHI can be shared or used by only those who need it for providing health care services to that patient. If the PHI is not required to do their jobs, it should not be accessed at all.

HIPAA-trained employees

Every organization engaged in providing health care or related services should train its workforce for HIPAA compliance. Every medical employee should be aware of the rules and regulations implied

by the HIPAA. The act imposes penalties on people and organization failing to conform to these rules. The severity of these penalties depends on the degree of violation.

As a hospital answering service also records PHI, it should be way more wary of sharing it with a person likely to be unauthorized to receive it.

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Visit the HIPAA compliance section at www.medical-answeringservices.com and know more about a [hospital answering service](#) and a [answering service](#) with full protection of patients' information.

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