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HIPAA and Why It Should Matter to You by EJ Williams

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HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act) was created with the individual in mind. It was enacted to make sure that people between jobs would still have insurance coverage for health care as well as to protect the integrity and privacy of an individualâ€™s medical history. Compliance with HIPAA means keeping individualâ€™s medical information confidential. Without this enforcement, yours, mine, and everyoneâ€™s medical history could be exploited for financial gain or gossip. Itâ€™s hard enou these days to sometimes be honest with medical providers, how much harder if we did not have these policies in place. However, without incentive, some people may not respect the values upon which this rule was created.

And what is this incentive to keep medical providers and the health industries people in check? There are potentially some very severe penalties. If HIPAA compliance is not enforced, it can result in civil and criminal penalties. Individuals and organizations can face up to $250,000 in fines and even up to ten years imprisonment. In 2010, Zhou, a former medical researcher at the UCLA Medical Center was sentenced to four months in prison for simply looking at the records of co-workers and patients. In addition, UCLA had to win back the trust of their patients and employees due to this breach. This was very costly for UCLA due to bad press coverage, however it really made a beacon of an example to take HIPAA seriously.

Whether you decide that you respect the confidentiality of your own medical history as well as that of others, or it is the penalties that inspire you to, there is no question that HIPAA compliance is a necessity. Companies & organizations have some options to get HIPAA certification, either through in-person HIPAA classes or HIPAA training online. Even online there are a wide variety of providers that tailor HIPAA training & compliance classes to the respective client, for example for HIPAA classes for healthcare providers, employer group health plans, insurance agents and brokers, and more. Typically classes take about an hour to complete, and at the end they should provide a certificate that is nationally recognized for 2 years. Make sure that the class includes all the most recent changes from the HITECH Act. Whichever class you choose for your respective industry, receiving a HIPAA certificate is a necessary task for legal compliance, mitigating legal risk, and respecting the confidentiality of peopleâ€™s personal medical issues.

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The author is an avid a HIPAA certification advocate. She believes that obtaining a a HIPAA certificate is necessary to health sectors for the welfare of their patients.

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