HHS Updates the HIPAA Privacy Rule: What Covered Entities Need to Do Before July 19, 2027

Client Advisories

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On November 19, 2026, the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) published a final rule that updates the HIPAA Privacy Rule. Most of the changes are practical rather than sweeping. Nevertheless, several of them will require revisions to how front-desk, medical records, and privacy teams work every day, so it is important to start planning now.

SUMMARY

- **Key dates:** The rule takes effect on January 19, 2027. You must comply by July 19, 2027.
- **The biggest change:** You will have a maximum of 15 calendar days, not 30, to respond when patients request copies of their records.
- **Less paperwork in one area:** You no longer need to ask patients to sign an acknowledgment that they received your Notice of Privacy Practices.
- **Your to-do list:** Review and update as necessary your Notice of Privacy Practices, policies, workflows, staff training, and Business Associate Agreements.

WHAT IS CHANGING

Patients Must Receive Their Records Faster

Today, you generally have 30 days to respond when patients ask for copies of their health information. Under the new rule, you will have **15 calendar days**. You can take one extension of up to 30 days, but only under specific conditions.

Why it matters**:** For many organizations, cutting the deadline in half is the change that will take the most work. Requests that now sit in a queue for a few weeks will need to move much faster.

Note that if your state has a shorter deadline, it will continue to apply.

The rule also addresses several issues regarding electronic access, including:

- Requests to send records to a patient's personal health application.
- Requests from patients to send their records to a third party.
- Fees, including posting fees to inform patients in advance what they will be charged and when you must charge nothing or only a permitted fee.

Simpler and Clearer Privacy Notices

- **No more acknowledgment forms.** Providers no longer need to make a good faith effort to obtain a signed acknowledgment that the patient received the Notice of Privacy Practices.
- **New content.** Your notice must include a standard header and updated information on how patients can get their records, how they can file a complaint, and who to contact at your organization.

Increased Ease in Coordination of Care

The rule makes it easier to share patient information with social service agencies and community-based organizations for care coordination and case management. This can help organizations connect patients with services such as housing, food, and transportation support.

Other Targeted Updates

- You may disclose information to Telecommunications Relay Services, which help patients who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities communicate by phone.
- There is more flexibility to share information to support readiness for the U.S. Public Health Service and NOAA Commissioned Corps.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW

1. **Speed up your records process.** Map how access requests are received, tracked, and completed, and address existing challenges that would make a 15-day deadline hard to meet. Confirm whether your state sets an even shorter deadline.
2. **Review your fees.** If you charge fees for records, confirm that your fee schedule is in line with the final rule and that patients receive cost information before you process their request. Ensure fees are posted.
3. **Update your Notice of Privacy Practices.** Add the standard header and new content, and take acknowledgment steps out of registration and intake.

4. **Revise your policies, procedures, and workflows.** Update your internal documents on patient access, disclosures, and care coordination.
5. **Amend business associate agreements.** Identify vendors that handle records requests or share patient information on your behalf, and update those agreements as needed. Update any template BAA documents that will be used in your contracting processes.
6. **Train your personnel.** Make sure front-desk, medical records, and privacy staff understand the new deadlines and procedures before July 19, 2027. Update your annual HIPAA training materials to alert your workforce of the final rule changes.
7. **Set a timeline.** Work backward from the compliance date so that updates, approvals, and training are done in time.

HHS has also issued a Privacy Rule Fact Sheet with more detail on the changes.

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about how the new rule affects your organization, please contact Lisa Stewart Albright at lalbright@archerlaw.com or 609.580.3710, or Shloka Joshi at sjoshi@archerlaw.com or 267.817.9248.

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