COMPLIANCE CONNECTION Newsletter



This newsletter is prepared monthly by the Midland Health Compliance Department and is intended to provide relevant compliance issues and hot topics.

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HIPAA and the Holidays: Tips to Maintain Patient Privacy and PHI Compliance

Midland Health PolicyTech: Policy #371 Materials Management Purchasing Code of Ethics Gifts and Gratuities *(See Page 2)*

FRAUD & ABUSE LAWS

The five most important Federal Fraud and Abuse Laws that apply to physicians are:

1. ***False Claims Act (FCA):*** *The civil FCA protects the Government from being overcharged or sold shoddy goods or services. It is illegal to submit claims for payment to Medicare or Medicaid that you know or should know are false or fraudulent.*
2. ***Anti-Kickback Statute (AKS):*** *The AKS is a criminal law that prohibits the knowing and willful payment of "remuneration" to induce or reward patient referrals or the generation of business involving any item or service payable by the Federal health care programs (e.g., drugs, supplies, or health care services for Medicare or Medicaid patients).*
3. ***Physician Self-Referral Law (Stark law):*** *The Physician Self-Referral Law, commonly referred to as the Stark law, prohibits physicians from referring patients to receive "designated health services" payable by Medicare or Medicaid from entities with which the physician or an immediate family member has a financial relationship, unless an exception applies.*
4. ***Exclusion Statute:*** *OIG is legally required to exclude from participation in all Federal health care programs individuals and entities convicted of the following types of criminal offenses: (1) Medicare or Medicaid fraud; (2) patient abuse or neglect; (3) felony convictions for other health-care-related fraud, theft, or other financial misconduct; and (4) felony convictions for unlawful manufacture, distribution, prescription, or dispensing of controlled substances.*
5. ***Civil Monetary Penalties Law (CMPL):*** *OIG may seek civil monetary penalties and sometimes exclusion for a wide variety of conduct and is authorized to seek different amounts of penalties and assessments based on the type of violation at issue. Penalties range from $10,000 to $50,000 per violation.*

Resource:
https://oig.hhs.gov/compliance/physician-education/fraud-abuse-laws/

MIDLAND HEALTH

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HIPAA and the Holidays: Tips to Maintain Patient Privacy and PHI Compliance

It's the most wonderful time of the year, but for healthcare professionals, it can also be one of the busiest and riskiest when it comes to patient privacy monitoring and PHI compliance.

As hospital volumes climb, staff rotate through PTO, and curious relatives appear in greater numbers, organizations often see seasonal spikes in inappropriate access, accidental disclosures, and compliance lapses.

While you celebrate with family and friends, it is important to stay vigilant with HIPAA policies and ensure your team has the tools and workflows needed to protect patient information. Below are updated tips to help keep your organization compliant, supported, and ready for the demands of the season.

Reinforce PHI Protection, Especially When Access Spikes

Protecting PHI is a year-round responsibility, but the holidays create unique challenges.

- During the holidays, many departments experience increased patient volume. With more admissions and discharges happening back-to-back, clinical staff may access more charts in less time, which increases the chance of accidental access.
- Insider snooping tends to rise around major holidays. Relatives often check on loved ones or try to confirm whether someone was admitted. Even well-intentioned curiosity violates policy. Automated patient privacy monitoring helps identify this behavior quickly by recognizing patterns tied to curiosity, concern, or carelessness.
- As PTO increases during November and December, privacy teams frequently find themselves short-staffed and juggling higher workloads. This is an ideal time to consider automation, which can help maintain coverage when your team is stretched thin.

Strengthen Defenses Against Ransomware and Cyber Threats

The holiday season has historically been a high-risk period for ransomware attacks because hospitals are overwhelmed and operating with leaner teams.

- Require MFA and strong passwords for all users.
- Educate staff on holiday-themed phishing attempts that mimic shopping confirmations, travel alerts, or donation requests.
- Limit non-clinical browsing on hospital devices. Checking flight schedules, tracking packages, or shopping online can expose networks to malicious links.

Reade entire article:
https://iatric.com/hipaa-the-holidays-tips-to-maintain-compliance/

MIDLAND HEALTH Compliance HOTLINE
855•662•SAFE (7233)
ID#: 6874433130
ID# is required to submit a report.
You can make your report or concern ANONYMOUSLY.

MIDLAND HEALTH

MIDLAND HEALTH POLICYTECH

Materials Management Purchasing Code of Ethics Gifts and Gratuities

Purpose: Identify the overall purpose and scope of the Purchasing Code of Ethics, to include guidelines for accepting gifts and gratuities.

1. Give first consideration to the objectives and policies of the institution.
2. Strive to obtain the maximum value for each dollar of expenditure.
3. Decline personal gifts and gratuities.
4. Grant all competitive suppliers equal consideration insofar as state or federal statute and institutional policy permit.
5. Conduct business with potential and current suppliers in an atmosphere of good faith, devoid of intentional misrepresentation.
6. Demand honesty in sales representation whether offered through the medium of a verbal or written statement, an advertisement, or a sample of the product.
7. Accord a prompt and courteous reception insofar as conditions permit to all who call on legitimate business missions.
8. Cooperate with trade, industrial and professional associations and governmental and private agencies for the purposes of promoting and developing sound business methods.
9. Foster fair, ethical and legal trade practices.

Strive for standardization to reduce cost and further the development of products and methods that reflect high quality, safety and effectiveness of care.

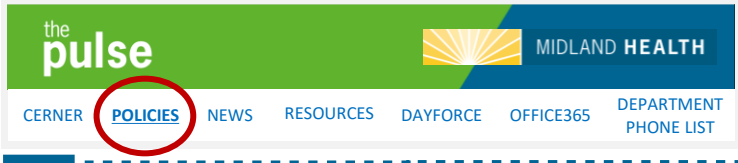
No employee shall accept gifts, personal loans, entertainment or other special considerations from vendors the Hospital is currently doing business with or prejudice the hospital's reputation. Gifts of nominal value may be acceptable on special occasions (such as holidays or significant Hospital milestone events) and must be evaluated and approved by the Director of Materials Management on a case-by-case basis.

Association with supplier representatives at business organization meetings is helpful in establishing better business understanding and is neither questionable nor unethical, provided the employee keeps himself free of obligations.

Read entire Policy:
Midland Health PolicyTech #371
"Materials Management Purchasing Code of Ethics Gifts and Gratuities"

Midland Health PolicyTech Instructions

Click this link located on the Midland Health intranet "Policies"
https://midland.policytech.com/dotNet/noAuth/login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f



IN OTHER COMPLIANCE NEWS

LINK 1
Boston Children's Health Physicians; XTIUM Settle Alleged HIPAA Violations for $2.7M

https://www.hipaajournal.com/boston-childrens-health-physicians-xtium-hipaa-penalty-ny-ct/

LINK 2
HIPAA Enforcement by State Attorneys General

https://www.hipaajournal.com/hipaa-enforcement-by-state-attorneys-general/

LINK 3
HHS Confirms HIPAA Penalties Will Not Be Adjusted for Inflation This Year

https://www.hipaajournal.com/hhs-hipaa-penalties-2026-no-adjustment/

LINK 4
Massachusetts AG Settles HIPAA & MassHealth Fraud Allegations with Transformative Healthcare

https://www.hipaajournal.com/massachusetts-ag-transformative-healthcare-hipaa-penalty/

ANTI-KICKBACK STATUTE (AKS)

DOJ's Fraud Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District Minnesota Uncover Nearly $30M in Benefits Fraud in Enforcement Surge

The U.S. Attorney's Office and Fraud Division have issued over 1,000 subpoenas for the purpose of uncovering fraud in Minnesota just this year alone.

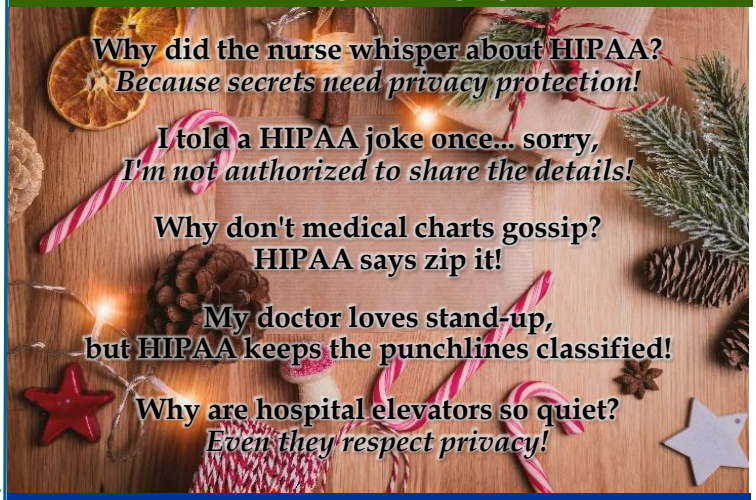
The Justice Department's National Fraud Enforcement Division (Fraud Division), and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Minnesota announced a series of enforcement actions targeting fraud involving taxpayer-funded Medicaid and SNAP programs.

Between Sept. 30, and Oct. 30, the Fraud Division and the District of Minnesota have charged, convicted, or sentenced 13 defendants whose alleged or proven schemes caused nearly $83 million in intended losses to the federal government, including approximately $29.1 million in fraud uncovered in the newly charged cases. This effort is a result of a partnership between prosecutors from DOJ's Fraud Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office. This year alone, the DOJ has issued over 1,000 subpoenas and executed over 40 premises warrants for the purpose of uncovering fraud in Minnesota.

"Minnesota is the epicenter for fraud in America," said Acting Deputy Attorney General Trent McCotter. "The Trump administration's crackdown is working, and the results speak for themselves. Through the Minnesota Fraud Task Force we are systematically dismantling schemes preying on Americans. Backed by more than a thousand subpoenas and 40 warrants, the message is simple: No one stealing from taxpayer-funded programs is safe."

Read entire article:
https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/dojs-fraud-division-and-us-attorneys-office-district-minnesota-uncover-voter-fraud-and

HIPAA HOLIDAY HUMOR



DECEMBER 2026
Health Observances Calendar

DEC 1	World AIDS Day
DEC 3	International Day of Persons with Disability
DEC 6-12	National Handwashing Awareness Week
DEC 7-11	National Influenza Vaccination Week

https://b2b.healthgrades.com/insights/blog/2026-health-observances-calendar/



Do you have a hot topic or interesting* COMPLIANCE NEWS *to report?

If so, please email an article or news link to:

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