

Report on Patient Privacy Volume 21, Number 10. October 14, 2021 The Wait Is Over: HHS's Choice to Run OCR Has Breach, Federal Leadership Experience

By Theresa Defino

For the past year, Lisa J. Pino, President Biden's new choice to lead the HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR), was the number two health official in the New York State Department of Health.^[1] Pino's career also includes helping to manage the aftermath of the 2015 breach of millions of records maintained by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

In announcing the selection of Pino, who is bilingual in English and Spanish, HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra referred to her as "an exceptional public servant." Pino's appointment also marks the third time a woman has been OCR director. In September 2009, President Obama appointed Georgina Verdugo, who served two and a half years. The second was Jocelyn Samuels, who was director from 2014 until the start of the Trump administration. HHS did not respond to RPP's requests to interview Pino.

As other OCR directors before her, Pino hails from a civil rights background, but the OPM breach added to her cybersecurity expertise. And she wasted little time getting started on the job: On Sept. 30, three days after her appointment, OCR issued guidance for medical providers and the public on vaccine mandates and HIPAA^[2] — a source of confusion that even made it into the new season of *Saturday Night Live* during its first sketch on Oct. 2.

In dealing with the OPM breach, which the HHS announcement said affected 4 million workers and "22 million surrogate profiles," Pino was involved in "renegotiating 700 vendor procurements and establishing new cybersecurity regulatory protections," the agency said.

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