

# Report on Medicare Compliance Volume 27, Number 33. September 17, 2018

## Tip Sheet: Understanding Disclosures Under HIPAA

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By Nina Youngstrom

*Stormont Vail Health in Topeka, Kansas, hands out this summary of the rules on disclosures under HIPAA to help improve compliance. Contact Chief Compliance Officer Christine Hogan-Newgren at [choganew@stormontvail.org](mailto:choganew@stormontvail.org).*

### **Disclosures to Family, Friends, and Others Involved in an Individual's Care and for Notification**

Stormont Vail Health may share protected health information with a patient's family members, relatives, friends, or other persons identified by the patient as involved in the patient's care. A covered entity also may share information about a patient as necessary to identify, locate, and notify family members, guardians, or anyone else responsible for the patient's care, of the patient's location, general condition, or death. This may include, where necessary to notify family members and others, the police, the press, or the public at large.

- The covered entity should get verbal permission from individuals or otherwise be able to reasonably infer that the patient does not object, when possible; if the individual is incapacitated or not available, covered entities may share information for these purposes if, in their professional judgment, doing so is in the patient's best interest.
- For patients who are unconscious or incapacitated: A health care provider may share relevant information about the patient with family, friends, or others involved in the patient's care or payment for care, if the health care provider determines, based on professional judgment, that doing so is in the best interests of the patient.
- In addition, a covered entity may share protected health information with disaster relief organizations that, like the American Red Cross, are authorized by law or by their charters to assist in disaster relief efforts, for the purpose of coordinating the notification of family members or other persons involved in the patient's care, of the patient's location, general condition, or death. It is unnecessary to obtain a patient's permission to share the information in this situation if doing so would interfere with the organization's ability to respond to the emergency.

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