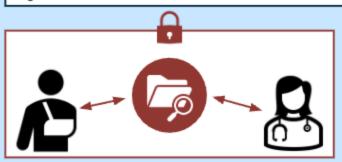# HIPAA
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
Information for Patients and Providers

What is HIPAA?

HIPAA is a law in the United States that helps protect private health information. Healthcare workers and organizations must follow rules to make sure medical records are kept safe.

The main goal of HIPAA is to give patients control of who can see their personal health information, so it is never shared without **consent**.

Consent is giving your **permission** for health care providers to share your health information. Consent may be <u>written</u> (signing a document) or <u>verbal</u> (saying *"Yes, I agree"*).

How is private health information protected?

HIPAA requires that healthcare organizations do safety checks to make sure your information is protected. These safety checks, or **risk assessments**, look for things like:

- bad passwords
- unlocked file cabinets
- poor internet security

Why is HIPAA important?

HIPAA is important because it:
- Keeps patient's personal health information **private**
- Helps patients **feel comfortable** sharing personal information with their doctor
- Puts patients **in control** of their medical records
- **Prevents discrimination** (i.e., a patient may be treated differently by an employer or insurance agency if they had access to this information)

How can health centers reduce their risk of HIPAA violations?

Strategies that keep patient information private:

• **Secure Data Storage**: Electronic health information is stored on computers with strong passwords and secure networks. Physical documents are locked in file cabinets.
• **Limited Access**: Electronic data shared with other health care organizations must be sent using safe file sharing systems with limited access.
• **Regular Staff Trainings**: Staff are trained to learn best practices for keeping patient information safe.

Why is it important to have two patient identifiers?

Two identifiers, like your <u>name</u> and <u>date of birth</u>, help make sure that the information shared is about you and only given to you.

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Questions?

If you have any questions, please talk to your health care provider, or visit www.hhs.gov/hipaa