

HIPAA in a Nutshell

HIPAA stands for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, a federal law passed in 1996. Title II of the Act provides for administrative simplification that requires the development of standards for the electronic exchange of health care information. Administrative simplification also requires rules to protect the privacy of personal health information and the establishment of security requirements to protect that information and the development of standard identifiers. The three main areas of HIPAA compliance for healthcare providers are:

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)	Patient Privacy	Security
Requires common format and data structure be used when exchanging specific transaction types, code sets and Identifiers electronically.	Requires covered entities to have formal policies and plans regarding who has the right to access patient identifiable health information.	Requires covered entities that maintain or transmit Patient Identifiable Data to develop formal methods to safeguard the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of electronic data.

Speech-language pathologists and audiologists working in “covered entity” organizations must be aware of compliance issues. According to the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) website, a covered entity are those businesses which furnish, bill or receive payment for health care in the normal course of business AND conduct covered transactions if any of these transactions are transmitted in electronic form such as by fax or electronic submission.

Compliance deadlines are as follows:

April 14 was the implementation deadline for the Privacy rule.

April 16 was the testing deadline for electronic transactions and code sets.

October 16 is the compliance date for electronic transactions and code sets.

The National Employer Identifier was effective July 30, 2002, and covered entities must comply with the requirement by July 30, 2004.

The Security Rule will be effective April 21, 2003, and covered entities must comply with the requirement by April 21, 2005, except for small health plans which are required to comply by April 21, 2006.

You can learn more about HIPAA from these resources:

<p>Official HHS guide to privacy standards http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/privacy.html</p> <p>Official HHS press release on HIPAA Privacy Rule. http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2001pres/20010412.html</p>	<p>Am I a covered entity? How to figure out if you need to comply with HIPAA. http://www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa2/support/tools/decisionsupport/default.asp</p> <p>CMS checklist to help with HIPAA preparations www.hipaa.org</p>
<p>HHS Fact Sheet on Final Privacy Rule. The final regulation covers health plans, health care clearinghouses, and those health care providers who conduct certain financial and administrative transactions (e.g., electronic billing and funds transfers) electronically. http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/admsimp/final/pvcfact2.htm</p> <p>Checklist from the Association of Electronic Healthcare Transactions provides a step-by-step guide to compliance. http://www.afehct.org/dfs/newhipaachecklist.pdf</p>	<p>Electronic transaction standards adopted under HIPAA http://aspe.hhs.gov/admsimp/faqtx.htm</p> <p>"Guidelines for the Clinical Use of Electronic Mail with Patients" http://www.amia.org/pubs/other/email_guidelines.html</p>