



SHARING PRIVATE INFORMATION In The Event of a Natural Disaster

What are our obligations if we are contacted by safety officials asking for emergency personal health information about one of our employees?

You may be asked to share protected health information or an employee's private information with providers to help in treatment, or with emergency relief workers to help coordinate services.

Unless you are a medical provider or employer-sponsored group health plan, you are not subject to the privacy restrictions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Nevertheless, you should only make disclosures to authorized personnel such as government officials acting in their official capacity, healthcare providers, or officially chartered organizations such as the Red Cross.

Can I share protected information without the consent of the individual?

Yes, if you are doing so to prevent or lessen an imminent threat and it is in the person's best interest. Even if you are not subject to HIPAA requirements, we recommend you treat all medical information as confidential, and afford it the same consideration for care as those granted by HIPAA.

If at all possible, attempt to get the individual's written or verbal permission to disclose their information before doing so. If they are incapacitated or cannot be located, you can share information without permission if doing so would be in the person's best interests.

You can share information to authorized personnel and organizations like the Red Cross (which are authorized by law to assist in disaster relief efforts) without permission if necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health and safety of a person or the public, or to allow the relief organization to respond to an emergency or provide assistance.