



## **HIPAA Compliance Programs Why are they so important?**

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It is a wide-spread myth that the HIPAA Law applies solely to front desk procedures. Many healthcare practitioners and office personnel believe as soon as the patient has signed the Notice of Privacy Practices that there is no further action required. However, HIPAA Compliance covers various different aspects of the practice from the time the patient walks into the office, during the examination, and the check-out procedures.

Ensuring HIPAA compliance requires knowledge, training, and experience. In the high likelihood of an insurance or government practice audit, adequate HIPAA Compliance Programs can save a practitioner thousands of dollars in fines and in having to restructure the practice to adhere to privacy guidelines.

The United States Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has identified seven major elements to assist healthcare practitioners develop a substantial HIPAA Compliance Program within their practice. These seven major elements include:

- Conducting internal audits and practice monitoring to ensure that all requirements of the HIPAA Law are being met.
- Implementing HIPAA Compliance & Practice Standards. Each healthcare practice should have a HIPAA Manual which identifies procedures to follow on a daily basis.
- Designating a HIPAA Compliance Officer.
- Conducting appropriate staff and faculty training and education on a regular basis.
- Responding to and mitigating breaches of compliance and/or patient privacy.
- Developing open lines of communication between your staff and patients.
- Implementing and enforcing disciplinary standards for staff and publicizing these standards for patients. (General, 2005)

Effective compliance plans assist practitioners speed up reimbursement of claims, minimize billing mistakes, and reduce the likelihood of an audit by the Healthcare Financing Administration or the Office of the Inspector General.

Doctors and practice managers have the responsibility of providing discipline and direction to ensure that staff follows the implemented HIPAA Compliance Program. Just as a captain leads his crew through storms, fog and tumultuous weather, an effective practice manager must provide direction to the staff by letting the HIPAA Compliance Program be their compass.

**Source**

General, U. S. (2005, October 5). *OIG Compliance Program for Individual and Small Group Physician Practices*. Retrieved August 18, 2010, from Office of the Inspector General ; Department of Health & Human Services:  
<http://oig.hhs.gov/authorities/docs/physician.pdf>

***About Comprehensive Credentialing and Billing Services LLC***

*Jennifer Hassouna, President of CCBSVA, is an expert in HIPAA certification, offering annual training to clinicians and their teams and preparing HIPAA Policies & Procedures manuals for practices and facilities. Her company also acts as HIPAA Compliance Officer for a number of practices, and offers insurance credentialing and billing services to healthcare facilities and practitioners.*