

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Clinician Briefing
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Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

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***Please note: Data and analysis discussed in these presentations were current when presented. Data collection and analysis are ongoing in many cases, therefore updates may be forthcoming elsewhere on this website, through publications such as [CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) or other venues. Presentations themselves will not be updated. Please bear this in mind when citing data from these presentations*

- The privacy rule, promulgated under the Health Insurance Portability and Account Ability Act, goes into effect today. The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is promulgating the rule as Congress elected not to create it by statute. The purpose of this call is to explain how the rule will affect public health practice and to make participants aware of the availability of guidelines that explain how the rule works.
- The privacy rule was explicitly crafted not to interfere with the normal flow of information to public health authorities as it is necessary in public health work to have access to confidential patient information. This has always been the case and continues to be so.
- Correctly interpreted, the privacy rule will allow the conduct of public health business with adequate protection of individual privacy and no hampering of the public health process. The privacy rule is designed so that we can continue any legitimate public health use of patient information. If you have a situation that appears to prevent the transfer of information to a public health authority under the privacy rule, it is probably an error.
- All the privacy rule actually does is codify what in most cases we should have been doing already to protect patient confidentiality. In every instance that I've seen where the rule would require change in the way we do business, it is a change for the better and one that we should already have made whether there was a privacy rule or not.

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- The privacy rule addresses the rights of individuals with regard to their health information and the procedures for exercising those rights. It also addresses uses and disclosures of individually identifiable health information that require authorization. It describes what constitutes protected health information and what entities are covered by the rule.

