

**Trustmark Insurance Company
Trustmark Life Insurance Company**

HIPAA Privacy Rule Information Packet Contents

1. Plan Sponsor Cover Letter
2. Documents to be **reviewed, signed and returned to Trustmark within 7 days after receipt of these materials and instructions:**
 - a. Plan Sponsor Certification to the Group Health Plan
 - b. List of Authorized Representatives
3. Documents to be copied and distributed to your Trustmark covered employees:
 - a. Notice of Privacy Practices
 - b. HIPAA Privacy Amendment
4. Frequently Asked Questions about HIPAA Privacy
5. Resources for additional HIPAA Information

Please return signed documents to Trustmark within 7 days after receipt of the enclosed materials.

Mail to: Trustmark Insurance Company
 HIPAA G445
 400 Field Drive
 Lake Forest, IL 60045-2581

Trustmark

INSURANCE COMPANY

Dear Plan Sponsor:

HIPAA Privacy Regulations went into effect April 14, 2003. Trustmark is providing you with the enclosed packet of information to help you understand the implications and requirements of this complex legislation.

What is HIPAA?

HIPAA stands for The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. The Privacy Rule aspect of HIPAA creates national standards regarding Protected Health Information (PHI), which is defined as any information that could tie a specific health condition to a specific patient or healthcare consumer. This could include name, address and Social Security number in connection with any reference to a particular treatment or condition.

The Privacy Rules govern how entities covered under HIPAA, such as your health plan, use and share PHI. The rules also include provisions to help individuals understand and control how their health information is used.

What are my responsibilities under the HIPAA Privacy Rules?

Because HIPAA applies to you as a plan sponsor of a group health benefit plan, you have responsibilities under this law. Trustmark is providing you with this packet of information in order assist Trustmark and your health plan in complying with the regulation. **Trustmark requires that you:**

1. Review, complete and sign the Plan Sponsor Certification and the List of Authorized Representatives
Please return to Trustmark within 7 days after receipt of these materials and instructions.
2. Distribute the Notice of Privacy Practices to all Trustmark covered employees.
3. Distribute the enclosed HIPAA Privacy Amendment to all Trustmark covered employees.

Please note: The enclosed information constitutes our interpretation of HIPAA Privacy Rules and is not intended as legal advice. Trustmark encourages you to review the laws and to seek the advice of your own counsel.

Trustmark Insurance Company will be compliant with HIPAA Privacy Rules effective April 14, 2003. If you have specific questions regarding the information contained in this packet, please contact your Trustmark sales representative.

Sincerely,

Trustmark Insurance Company
and
Trustmark Life Insurance Company

Plan Sponsor Certification

- Complete, sign and return the attached Plan Sponsor Certification to Trustmark within 7 days after receipt of these materials.**

List of Authorized Representatives

- Complete, sign and return the attached List of Authorized Representatives to Trustmark within 7 days after receipt of these materials.**

**TRUSTMARK INSURANCE COMPANY
TRUSTMARK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY**

PLAN SPONSOR CERTIFICATION TO THE GROUP HEALTH PLAN

During the term of this group health benefit plan you, the plan sponsor, may receive Protected Health Information. As set forth in the HIPAA Privacy Rule ("Rule"), Protected Health Information ("PHI") includes individually identifiable health information and relates to the past, present, or future:

- condition of an individual's physical or mental health;
- health care provided to an individual; or
- payment for health care provided to an individual.

As plan sponsor of a self-funded or minimum premium group health plan, you will receive PHI from us. The HIPAA Privacy Rule requires that you, the plan sponsor, must agree to safeguard and protect the confidentiality of any PHI you receive. This will be accomplished by the completion and return of this Certification and the attached List of Authorized Representatives. The plan sponsor also agrees to amend the plan document of the group health plan consistent with this Certification.

PLAN SPONSOR CERTIFICATION

I, the plan sponsor, or the designated representative of the plan sponsor, certify that the plan sponsor will:

- not use or disclose PHI for employment-related actions and decisions, or in connection with any other benefit or employee benefit plan of the plan sponsor.
- Not use or disclose to anyone the PHI of any individual covered under this group health benefit plan other than as described in this Certification, and permitted or required by the HIPAA Privacy Rule and other applicable law.
- Ensure that any agents, including subcontractor, to whom I provide PHI, agree to the same restrictions and conditions that apply to the plan sponsor in connection with the HIPAA Privacy Rule.
- Report to the group health benefit plan any use or disclosure of the information that is inconsistent with the uses or disclosures permitted or required by the HIPAA Privacy Rule and other applicable law.
- Make available PHI as required in the Rule for Access of Individuals to their own PHI.
- Make available PHI as required in the Rule in order to amend PHI and incorporate any amendment to PHI in accordance with the Rule.
- Make available the information required to provide an accounting of disclosures of PHI as required by the Rule.
- Make its internal practices, books and records relating to the use and disclosure of PHI received from the group health benefit plan available to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Return or destroy, if feasible, all PHI received from the group health benefit plan that the plan sponsor still maintains in any form and retain no copies of such information when no longer needed for the purpose for which disclosure was made. If destruction is not feasible, limit further uses and disclosures to those purposes that make the return or destruction of the information infeasible.

- Provide a List of Authorized Representatives which includes the identity or job title and affiliation of persons required or permitted to receive information in order to perform services on behalf of the group health benefit plan (e.g. claim administrator, case management vendor, pharmacy benefit manager, claim subrogation vendor, claim auditor, provider network manager, utilization and review management vendor, stop loss insurance carrier, insurance broker/consultant), and any other entity subcontracted to assist in administrating the health plan.
- Provide PHI only to those individuals or entities identified on the List of Authorized Representatives.
- Provide an effective mechanism for resolving any issues of noncompliance with the provision of this Certification.

Name of Group Health Benefit Plan (Employer): _____

Group Number: _____

Signed by (Plan Sponsor): _____

Print Name and Title: _____

Date: _____

**TRUSTMARK INSURANCE COMPANY
TRUSTMARK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY**

LIST OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES

The following individuals perform administrative functions for my group health plan and may have access to Protected Health Information (PHI) or summary health information. These individuals are authorized to discuss PHI that is the minimum necessary to administer the group health plan.

Group Name: _____ Group Number: _____

Name and/or Title of Person: _____

Company Name: _____

How does the Authorized Person use or disclose PHI in the performance of their job duties?

Name and/or Title of Person: _____

Company Name: _____

How does the Authorized Person use or disclose PHI in the performance of their job duties?

Name and/or Title of Person: _____

Company Name: _____

How does the Authorized Person use or disclose PHI in the performance of their job duties?

(If more space is needed, please use another sheet of paper.)

If there are any changes to be made to this list, additions or deletions, the plan sponsor is required to notify us within 30 days of the change.

Signed by: _____

Title: _____ Date: _____

Notice of Privacy Practices

- Distribute a copy of the attached Notice of Privacy Practices to all Trustmark covered employees.**

**TRUSTMARK INSURANCE COMPANY
and
TRUSTMARK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
(We, Us, Our)**

**NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES
Effective: April 14, 2003**

**THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED
AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.**

Introduction

In order to provide insurance coverage and/or health plan administrative services, we must obtain and maintain Protected Health Information (PHI). This privacy notice describes the types of information that is collected and your rights regarding how that information can be used.

PHI is individually identifiable health information that is created or received by your provider, your health plan or insurer, a data clearinghouse, a health authority, employer, school or university. PHI can be maintained or transmitted in any form or medium. It relates to the past, present or future:

- condition of your physical or mental health;
- health care provided to you; or
- payment for the health care provided to you.

PHI does not include summary health information or information that has been de-identified according to the standards for de-identification provided for in the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

Permitted/Required Uses and Disclosures of PHI

Your PHI will be used and disclosed for the purpose of routine treatment, payment and health care operations.

Use and Disclosure for Treatment

Your PHI may be used by, and disclosed to, health care providers including, but not limited to, doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, medical students and other health care personnel involved in your treatment.

Use and Disclosure for Payment

Your PHI may be used by, and disclosed to, individuals involved in the collection of your premium and the payment of your benefits and other claims administration, including claim payment and adjudication or subrogation of health benefit claims. The use and disclosure also includes verification of participation or enrollment in the plan, eligibility for coverage and plan benefits. Your PHI may be shared with persons involved in utilization review, including pre-certification, pre-authorization, and concurrent and retrospective review, to assist in reimbursement of health care claims or other claims payment.

Use and Disclosure for Health Care Operations

Your PHI may be used and disclosed for plan operation purposes including, but not limited to: underwriting; premium rating; billing and premium adjustments; submitting claims; placing a contract for reinsurance of risk relating to claims for health care, including stop-loss and excess loss insurance; quality review assessments; audits, including fraud and abuse detection and compliance programs; business management and planning; the sale, transfer, merger or consolidation of a covered entity; legal or administrative services; actuarial pricing, studies and review; complaint review; and regulatory review and other legal compliance. In addition, your PHI may be used and disclosed for case management, and care coordination, contacting of health care providers and patients with information about treatment, drug and disease management alternatives and other related functions that do not include treatment.

We may share this information with our business associates for purposes of utilization reviews, appropriateness of care reviews, peer review for resolution of grievances, consultation with outside health care providers, consultants and attorneys, and other health related benefits and services that may be of interest to you. We require our business associates to sign an agreement specifying their compliance with our privacy policies.

We have developed privacy policies and procedures in order to ensure the privacy of your PHI. These policies and procedures are based on appropriate administrative, technical and physical safeguards necessary to maintain confidentiality. Access to your PHI is limited to those individuals that have a legitimate business need for that information. This protection extends to the use of your PHI by our business associates.

Other Permitted/Required Uses and Disclosures of PHI

We, or our approved business associates, may use and disclose your protected health information for reasons permitted by the Rule, including but not limited to the following:

- those required by law;
- in response to a court order or other legal proceeding;
- judicial and administrative proceedings;
- law enforcement purposes;
- to comply with worker's compensation or other similar laws;
- public health activities;
- health oversight activities;
- reporting abuse, neglect or domestic violence;
- the military if you are a member of the armed services;
- correctional institutions if you are an inmate;
- disclosures of decedent's information to coroners, medical examiners and funeral directors;
- organ, eye or tissue donation purposes;
- national security and intelligence agencies as authorized by law.

We will only use or disclose the minimum amount necessary to perform these functions. We may disclose PHI to the sponsor of your health plan for any purpose described in this section. If you are a member of a group health plan, contact your employer for the name of your plan sponsor.

Other Uses and Disclosures of PHI

Uses and disclosures of PHI for purposes other than those described in Permitted/Required Uses and Disclosures of PHI, will be made only with your written authorization. If you provide us authorization to use or disclose your PHI, you may revoke that authorization, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose information following the specific purpose contained in the authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures already made with your authorization, and that we are required to retain any records we may have containing your PHI. If you revoke your authorization for payment or health care operations, you may jeopardize the administration of the benefits under your health plan.

Your Individual Rights With Respect to PHI

Upon written request, you have the right to:

- request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of your PHI. We are not required to agree to a requested restriction.
- receive confidential communication of PHI;
- access our records containing descriptions of your PHI;
- request an amendment to your PHI; We are not required to agree to a requested amendment.
- receive an accounting of impermissible PHI disclosures or disclosures made in compliance with the Rule for which an accounting is required.

Unless specifically requested otherwise, we will communicate PHI in connection with treatment, payment or health care operations, with any family member covered under your plan. Should any family member want a restriction on such disclosure of PHI, they must request such restriction in writing. Although we are not required to agree to a requested restriction, we will consider all factors explained in the request.

Except for uses and disclosures associated with treatment, payment, or health care operations, we do not use or disclose PHI when specifically protected by more stringent state law. Examples of more stringent state laws include those protecting HIV status, results of genetic testing, and indications of domestic abuse. We will follow state privacy laws that are more stringent than this federal law.

If you have chosen to receive this privacy notice electronically, you may also receive a paper copy from us upon your request.

Our Duties Regarding the Use and Disclosure of PHI

We are committed to maintaining your privacy and are required:

- by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI;
- to abide by the terms of the Notice of Privacy Practices currently in effect.

We reserve the right to change the terms of this privacy notice, and have such change be effective for all PHI that is maintained. Notification of a revised privacy notice will be provided through one of the following:

- U.S. Postal Service;
- revised Plan Document;
- Internet E-mail.

Up to date privacy notices are maintained on our Website.

How to File a Complaint Regarding the Use and Disclosure of PHI

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with us or with the Secretary of Health and Human Services. All complaints must be in writing. Please be assured that you may not be retaliated against for filing a complaint.

How to Contact Us

You may contact our representative at the following:

Privacy Officer
HIPAA Compliance Department
Trustmark Insurance Company
P.O. Box 7961
Lake Forest, IL 60045-7961
Email – HIPAAComplianceDepartment@Trustmarkinsurance.com
Website – www.trustmarkinsurance.com

HIPAA Privacy Amendment

- Distribute a copy of the attached Privacy Amendment to all Trustmark covered employees.**

HIPAA PRIVACY AMENDMENT

Effective as of: April 14, 2003

This amendment is attached to and made a part of the health benefit plan. Except as stated in this amendment, it shall not change any of the terms or provisions of the health benefit plan.

Pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA") Privacy Rule, the following language is attached to and becomes part of your health benefit plan.

DEFINITIONS

Plan Sponsor:

- the employer in the case of an employee benefit plan established or maintained by a single employer;
- the employee organization in the case of a plan established or maintained by an employee organization; or
- the association, committees, joint board of trustees, or other similar group of representatives of the parties who establish or maintain the plan in the case of a plan established or maintained by two or more employers or jointly by one or more employers and one or more employee organizations.

Protected Health Information (PHI): Protected Health Information (PHI) includes individually identifiable health information that is created or received by your provider, your health benefit plan or insurer, a data clearinghouse, a health authority, employer, school or university. PHI can be maintained or transmitted in any form or medium. It relates to the past, present, or future:

- condition of your physical or mental health,
- health care provided to you; or
- payment for the health care provided to you.

PERMITTED/REQUIRED USE AND DISCLOSURE OF YOUR PHI

- Your PHI will be used and disclosed for the purpose of routine treatment, payment of your benefits and health care operations, including plan and benefit administration. Your PHI may also be used or disclosed between your health plan, plan sponsor and any approved business associates as required or permitted by law, including the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

AMENDMENT PROVISION

The plan sponsor may receive information as to whether individuals are participating in the group health plan, or are enrolled or disenrolled in the plan.

The plan sponsor may also request summary health information for:

- obtaining premium bids from health plans for providing health insurance coverage, or
- modifying, amending or terminating the plan.

Summary health information summarizes claim history, claims expenses or types of claims experienced by individuals under the plan and also contains information which has been de-identified. De-identification deletes PHI and leaves only geographic information.

Your plan sponsor is required by law to:

- not use or disclose to anyone the PHI of any individual covered under this health benefit plan other than as permitted or required by the health benefit plan or by law;
- ensure that any agents, including subcontractor(s), to whom your plan sponsor provides PHI received from the health benefit plan, agree to the same restrictions and conditions that apply to the plan sponsor with respect to such information;
- not to use or disclose the information for employment-related actions and decisions or in connection with any other benefit or employee benefit plan of the plan sponsor;

- report to the health benefit plan any use or disclosure of the information that is inconsistent with the uses or disclosures provided for or which your plan sponsor becomes aware;
- allow you, upon written request, to:
 - access and amend your PHI;
 - receive an accounting of disclosures of PHI for other than treatment, payment and healthcare operations.
- make its internal practices, books and records relating to the use and disclosure of PHI received from the health benefit plan available to the Secretary of the Office of Civil Rights of HHS for the purposes of determining compliance by the group health plan;
- return or destroy, if feasible, all PHI received from the health benefit plan that your plan sponsor still maintains in any form and retain no copies of such information when no longer needed for the purpose for which disclosure was made; if destruction is not feasible, limit further uses and disclosures to those purposes that made the return or destruction of the information infeasible;
- provide PHI only to those individuals, under the control of the plan sponsor who perform plan administrative functions for the health benefit; (i.e. eligibility, enrollment, payroll deduction, benefit determination; claim reconciliation assistance), and to make clear to such individuals that they are not to use PHI for any reason other than for plan administrative functions nor to release PHI to an unauthorized individual;
- provide PHI only to those entities required to receive the information in order to maintain the health benefit plan (i.e. claim administrator, case management vendor, pharmacy benefit manager, claim subrogation, vendor, claim auditor, network manager, stop loss insurance carrier, insurance broker/consultant, and any other entity subcontracted to assist in administering the health plan; and
- provide an effective mechanism for resolving any issues of noncompliance with regard to the items mentioned in this Amendment.

HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT REGARDING THE USE AND DISCLOSURE OF YOUR PHI

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with us or with the Secretary of Health and Human Services. All complaints must be in writing. Please be assured that you may not be retaliated against for filing a complaint.

How To Contact Us

You may contact our representative at:

Privacy Officer
 HIPAA Compliance Department
 Trustmark Insurance Company
 P.O. Box 7961
 Lake Forest, IL 60045-7961
 Email – HIPAAComplianceDepartment@TrustmarkInsurance.com
 Website – www.trustmarkins.com

Frequently Asked Questions about Privacy

What is HIPAA?

The guide constitutes and interpretation of HIPAA Privacy Rules and is not intended as legal advise

Q-1: What is HIPAA?

A: HIPAA is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (passed by Congress in 1996). The Privacy Rule was issued by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Privacy Rule (45 CFR Part 160 and Subparts A and E of 164) of HIPAA provides the first comprehensive Federal protection for the privacy of health information.

Q-2: What does the HIPAA Privacy Rule do?

A: The HIPAA Privacy rule creates national standards to protect individuals' medical records and other protected health information. It gives individuals more control over their health information; it sets boundaries on use and disclosure of health records; and it establishes safeguards that covered entities must set up to protect information.

Q-3: What is protected health information (PHI)?

A: PHI is individually identifiable health information that is created or received by a provider, a health plan or insurer, a data clearinghouse, a health authority, employer, school or university. PHI can be maintained or transmitted in any form or medium. It relates to the past, present or future:

- *condition of physical or mental health,*
- *health care provided; or*
- *payment for health care provided.*

PHI does not include summary health information or information that has been de-identified according to the standards for de-identification provided for in the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

Q-4: Who must comply with the new HIPAA privacy standards?

A: Health Plans, health care clearinghouses and health care providers (who conduct certain financial and administrative transactions electronically).

Q-5: By what date must covered entities meet the HIPAA privacy standards?

A: April 14, 2003. Small group health plans have until April 14, 2004. Small group health plans are defined as plans with annual receipts of \$5 million or less.

Q-6: Are long/short term disability, workers compensation, and automobile liability that included coverage for medical payments covered under HIPAA?

A: No, the listed types of policies are not health plans.

Resources for Additional HIPAA Information

1. HIPAA web site links

<http://pweb.netcom.com/~ottx4/HIPAA.htm>

- Federal Government Sites.
- Professional Association and Organizations.
- Listservs.
- Implementation Guides.
- State Government and State-Specific HIPAA Sites.

2. HIPAAcomply

<http://www.hipaacomply.com/>

Up-to-date information regarding HIPAA security and privacy compliance.

3. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa1/content/links.asp>

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa1/content/more.asp>

General HIPAA insurance reform and related information.

- What is HIPAA?
- Overview.
- Q&A.

Q-7: Are there penalties for not complying?

*A: **Civil Monetary Penalties** Section 1176 provides that HHS will impose on any person who violates a provision of the Privacy Rule a penalty of up to \$100 for each violation. This is capped at \$25,000 per year, per violation of an identical requirement or prohibition.*

***Knowing Violation** Congress, in Section 262 of HIPAA, created the crime of "Wrongful Disclosure of Identifiable Health Information." If a person obtains or releases protected health information under false pretenses, the penalty increases to a fine up to \$100,000 and imprisonment of not more than five years.*

If the offense is committed with the intent to sell, transfer or use Individually Identifiable Health Information for commercial advantage, personal gain, or malicious harm, the perpetrator may be imprisoned for up to 10 years and fined not more than \$250,000.

Q-8: Will the Department of Health and Human Services make future changes to the HIPAA Privacy Rule?

A: Under HIPAA, HHS has the authority to modify the privacy standards, as the Secretary may deem appropriate. However, a standard can be modified only once in a 12-month period.

What does the HIPAA Privacy Rule mean to me?

Q-9 What can I do now with PHI and how will that change after April 14, 2003

A: Now, aside from any ERISA restrictions, you can use and disclose PHI of your plan participants freely. After the effective date of this rule, only designated persons who need access to protected health information to carry out health plan administrative functions can use and disclose protected health information of plan participants.

Q-10: What information will I be able to get concerning my plan participants after 14, 2003?

A: You will be able to use and disclose to business associates protected health information that is minimally necessary to perform treatment, payment and healthcare operations (TPO.)

Q-11: What is a business associate?

A: A business associate is a person or entity that performs certain functions or activities that involve the use or disclosure of protected health information on behalf of, or provides services to, a health plan.

Examples of business associates are as follows:

- *A third party administrator that assists a health plan with claims processing.*
- *A consultant whose services to a health plan involve access to protected health information.*
- *A utilization review or case management company*
- *A pharmacy benefits manager that manages a health plan's prescription benefits.*
- *A preferred provider organization that manages a health plan's network of providers.*

Q-12: Is a reinsurer/stop loss provider a business associate of the plan?

A: Generally, no. A reinsurer does not become a business associate of a health plan simply by selling a reinsurance policy to a health plan and paying claims under the reinsurance policy. However, a business associate relationship could arise if the reinsurer is performing a function on behalf of, or providing services to, the health plan that do not directly relate to the provision of the reinsurance benefits.

Q-13: What are Treatment, Payment and health care Operations (TPO)?

A: "Treatment" generally means the provision, coordination, or management of health care and related services among health care providers or by a health care provider with a third party, consultation between health care providers regarding a patient, or the referral of a patient from one health care provider to another.

"Payment" encompasses the various activities of health care providers to obtain payment or be reimbursed for their services and of a health plan to obtain premiums, to fulfill their coverage responsibilities and provide benefits under the plan, and to obtain or provide reimbursement for the provisions of health care.

Examples of common payment activities include, but are not limited to:

- *Determining eligibility or coverage under a plan and adjudicating claims;*
- *Billing and collection activities;*
- *Reviewing health care services for medical necessity, coverage, and justification of charges and the like;*
- *Utilization Review activities.*

"Health care operations" are certain administrative, financial, legal and quality improvement activities of a covered entity that are necessary to run its business and to support the core functions of treatment and payment. Common activities include, but are not limited to:

- *Underwriting and other activities related to the creation, renewal or replacement of a contract of health insurance or health benefits and securing or placing a contract for reinsurance of risk relating to health care claims, -*
- *Conducting or arranging for medical review legal and auditing services, including fraud and abuse detection and compliance programs;*
- *Business planning and development, such as conducting cost-management and planning analyses related to managing and operating the entity; and*
- *Business management and general administrative activities*

Q-14 Can the health plan use or disclose PHI for reasons other than TPO?

A: No, not unless the use and disclosure is made in connection with a HIPAA Authorization or is required or permitted by the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

Q:-15 Can persons designated by the health plan use and disclose any information they want?

A: No, those individuals who are authorized to have access to PHI must use and disclose the minimum amount of information necessary to perform the required job function for the plan.

Q-16: How are group health plans expected to determine what is the minimum necessary information that can be used, disclosed or requested for a particular purpose?

A: The HIPAA Privacy Rule requires a health plan to make reasonable efforts to limit use, disclosure of, and requests for protected health information to the minimum necessary to accomplish the intended purpose.

The minimum necessary standard requires health plans to evaluate their practices and enhance protections as needed to limit unnecessary or inappropriate access to protected health information. It is intended to reflect and be consistent with, not override, professional judgement and standards. Therefore, it is expected that health plans will utilize input of prudent professionals involved in health care activities when developing policies and procedures that appropriately limit access to personal health information without sacrificing the quality of health care.

Q-17: Must the HIPAA Privacy Rule's minimum necessary standard be applied to uses or disclosures that are authorized by an individual?

A: No. Uses and disclosures that are authorized by the individual are exempt from the minimum necessary requirements.

Q-18: In limiting access, are health plans required to completely restructure existing workflow systems, including redesigning office space and upgrading computer systems, in order to comply with the HIPAA Privacy Rule's minimum necessary requirements?

A: No. The basic standard for minimum necessary uses requires that health plans make reasonable efforts to limit access to protected health information to those in the workforce who need access, based on their roles with the health plan.

The Department generally does not consider facility redesigns as necessary to meet the reasonable standard for minimum necessary uses. However, health plans may need to make certain adjustments to their facilities to minimize access, such as isolating and locking filing cabinets or records rooms or providing additional security such as passwords on computers maintaining personal information.

Q-19: Are business associates required to restrict their uses and disclosures to the minimum necessary?

A: A business associate contract must limit the business associate's uses and disclosures of, as well as requests for, protected health information to be consistent with the health plan's minimum necessary policies and procedures.

What do I have to do to be in compliance with this Federal Rule?

Q-20: Generally, what does the HIPAA Privacy Rule require the average health plan to do?

A: The Privacy Rule requires activities such as:

- *Providing a notice to participants about their privacy rights and how their information can be used.*
- *Adopting and implementing privacy procedures for the plan.*
- *Training employees so that they understand the privacy procedures.*
- *Designating an individual to be responsible for seeing that the privacy procedures are adopted and followed.*
- *Securing patient records containing individually identifiable health information so that they are not readily available to those who do not need them.*

Q-21 What information must be provided in the notice?

A: Covered entities are required to provide a notice in plain language that describes:

- *How the covered entity may use and disclose protected health information about an individual.*
- *The individual's rights with respect to the information, including a statement that the covered entity is required by law to maintain privacy of protected health information.*
- *Whom individuals can contact for further information about the covered entity's privacy policy.*

The notice must include an effective date.

A covered entity is required to promptly revise and distribute its notice whenever it makes material changes to any of its privacy practices.

Q-22: How should the notice be delivered?

A: A covered entity must make its notice available to any person who asks for it.

A covered entity must prominently post and make available its notice on any Web sites it maintains that provides information about its customer services or benefits.

A health plan must also:

- *Provide the notice to individuals then covered by the plan no later than April 14, 2003 (April 14, 2004, for small health plans) and to new enrollees at the time of enrollment.*
- *Provide a revised notice to individuals then covered by the plan within 60 days of a material revision.*
- *Notify individuals then covered by the plan of the availability of and how to obtain the notice at least once every three years.*

Q-23: Can covered entities distribute their notices as part of other mailings or distributions?

A: Yes

Q-24: Does a health plan have to provide a copy of its notice to each dependent receiving coverage under a policy?

A: No. A health plan satisfies the HIPAA Privacy Rule's requirements for providing the notice by distributing its notice to the named insured or employee of a policy under which coverage is provided both the named insured or employee and his or her dependents.

Q-25: Where can a group health plan obtain assistance or more information on the HIPAA Privacy Rule?

A: The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) maintains a Web site with helpful information. The address is: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/>