

Mercer HIPAA Procedure

Procedure: Physical Safeguarding of Protected Health Information

Source of Data: Various Entities, People, and Locations

Submitted By: Mercer HIPAA Compliance Committee

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The physical protection of Protected Health Information (PHI), which is information that is identifiable and contains health status, treatment, diagnosis, or other sensitive health information of a specific individual, is critical and is required by Mercer University under its HIPAA Policies.

PHI must be physically secured in such a manner as to prevent unauthorized access. Guidelines for maintaining physical security include, but are not limited to the following:

- Each organization will designate faculty, staff, and students that have a need to know; the list of authorized individuals will be kept on file with the University HIPAA Privacy Officer.
- All PHI will be stored in locking file cabinets with access limited to those with proper authorization. Locking file cabinets should be uniquely keyed.
- All PHI will be stored in locking file cabinets in locations secured by locks during times when authorized personnel are not in the area.
- All PHI that is outside of the file cabinets during normal operations will be kept confidential and from the view of unauthorized individuals.
- All file folders or documents that contain PHI will be secured when all authorized personnel leave the work area.
- All computer screens containing PHI will have timeouts and screen savers installed that protect the viewing of the information by unauthorized personnel. Computer screens will be oriented in a manner that prevents unauthorized individuals from accessing PHI.
- When PHI is removed from a secured area, it will be transferred in a format that maintains its confidentiality. This can be accomplished by securing data in closed envelopes, folders, boxes, etc. This information must be kept from casual view.

These guidelines are to be considered the minimum required by all schools, colleges, departments, or programs. If necessary, more stringent procedures may be initiated.