

Understanding Role of HIPAA in Medical Transcription

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability act or HIPAA as it is popularly known has been enacted and enforced to protect the health care rights of the patients. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through this act makes it illegal for all the health service providers to disclose, transfer or divulge the patient health information to an unauthorized entity.

Hospitals, clinics, health insurance companies and other health service providers come under the direct purview of the HIPAA and are completely accountable to regulatory authorities. These entities are known as covered entities and are bound by the HIPAA law, which makes it mandatory for them to safely store, process and exchange the confidential patient health information. Any lapse will invite penalties and convictions.

But there are some secondary healthcare entities that are not covered by HIPAA but are somehow related to the covered entities. Companies which provide medical transcription services to hospitals or clinics fall under the category of business associates. Medical transcription companies will only come under the purview of HIPAA only when they actually perform any activities, which fall under HIPAA.

Keeping in mind the differences that exist between the state and national laws pertaining to the HIPAA compliance requirements of the business associates, it is necessary for the covered entities to enter into a written agreement with their associates. A written assurance, from the medical transcription company that it will follow the HIPAA compliance norms while transcribing the patient health records will completely ensure safety and integrity of the patient health data.

Hospitals, clinics and other health service provider are directly accountable to HIPAA. They should get a written assurance from their business associate that patient health information will be protected as per HIPAA norms. Hence it is important for the business associates like medical transcription service provider to very well understand they are also responsible for protection of patient health information and any lapse on their part can invite strict HIPAA penalties and suffer loss of business from the covered entities.

Medical transcription company should transcribe patient health reports as per HIPAA norms.

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