

Scenario: Computer Monitors

As Jane signs in at the reception window she notices an unattended computer monitor with patient information that she can clearly read. She wonders if other patients have seen her information.

Privacy Points

Computer monitors represent a source of PHI that we may tend to overlook. Often we regard this information as something that the general public would not be able to understand or easily decipher. But to make that assumption places patient privacy at risk.

Remember

- It is important to protect patient information displayed on monitors
- Turn the screen away from public view or, if this is not possible, use a privacy screen that allows clear vision only to those in direct view
- A password-protected screen saver or automatic log-off also will protect information when the monitor is unattended or the screen is idle
- Log-off computers when you are finished working with them
- Don't assume that information on monitors is not easily understood by the public and, therefore, not a privacy issue

Scenario: Physical Security

Once again it has been a busy day at the office. It is now 7:15 PM and finally time to close up the office. The remaining staff is getting out exactly 45 minutes later than usual, and, as one could guess, the office is a disaster. Charts are left in various locations; at the front desk, in the chart room but not filed, and in the doctor's personal office on his desk. To make matters worse, one of the employees went outside for a smoke break and left the rear door slightly propped. In the employees' haste to leave for home, the records are left unlocked and scattered in many areas, documents are left on the fax machine, and no one takes time to notice that the door is ajar.

Privacy Points

Everyone needs to pay attention to security in the office and in the physical surroundings. Leaving PHI unsecured by leaving records in unlocked areas, exterior doors unsecured, and documents left unprotected creates a privacy breach for all of the patients.