

Mailing Compliance Best Practices in Healthcare: WHAT EVERY ORGANIZATION NEEDS TO KNOW

IS YOUR MAILING OPERATION COMPLIANT?

For many mailers in healthcare, the answer is a hesitant...maybe. The reason for this is simple, staying compliant with the complex laws that surround mailing in the medical field is a big challenge. And the fact that these laws have only recently been updated further adds to the difficulty.

Unfortunately, the penalties for non-compliant mailing practices are significant, and most organizations are not even aware that they are at risk. To put it into perspective, printed data is subject to the same regulations as electronic data, and while almost every organization now goes to great lengths to protect electronic communications, very few have the same safeguards when it comes to printed mail.

To assist companies that want to bring their mailing operations into compliance, Pitney Bowes has created this resource to highlight the key regulations that may impact mailing operations, along with best practices that will help to reduce risks and make mass mailings more efficient.



REGULATIONS THAT IMPACT MAILERS

A number of privacy and security regulations can affect mailing operations. In particular, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) 2.0 impacts healthcare organizations and protects patient and consumer privacy. HIPAA regulations are even stricter than many other types of financial regulations because they specify that only authorized employees can view patient information.

Like other industries, many medical practitioners have gone to great lengths to safeguard their electronic data, but they often don't have as much control over their postal mailings. When mail preparation is outsourced, most of the people who handle patients' medical claims forms, statements, and other sensitive information will not be authorized. This increases the chance of security breaches and the theft of personal information, such as Social Security numbers

CONSEQUENCES

In 2009, HIPAA 2.0 initiated tougher penalties for violations. Fines range from \$25,000 to \$1.25 million, depending on the severity and frequency of the offense.

IS YOUR ORGANIZATION COMPLIANT? THE TOP 3 QUESTIONS TO ASK

All mailers need to ensure that they are protecting patients' personal information and are in compliance with government regulations. Here are three questions that will help determine if your organization is in compliance:

- Does hard-copy mail have the same firewalls and level of security as electronic communications?
- Is there on-demand visibility into each mail piece?
- Does an audit trail exist for each mail piece for quality assurance (either in-house or as it's being sorted at the post office)?

If the answer is not "yes" to all of these questions, don't panic. Instead, take it as an opportunity to implement best practices for mailing compliance.

BEST PRACTICES FOR MAILING COMPLIANCE

If an organization outsources mailing services there are a number of best practices that can help reduce the associated compliance risks. Make sure that an outsourcing service maintains the following industry standard certifications:

- **Statement on Auditing Standards (SAS) No. 70.** According to the SAS website, a SAS 70 Audit "shows that a service organization has been through an in-depth audit of their control objectives and control activities, which often include controls over information technology and related processes."
- **International Organization for Standardization (ISO).** The ISO is the world's largest developer and publisher of International Standards. Since ISO is a globally recognized standard, it is important that any outsourcing service provider maintains this certification.
- **Mail Preparation Total Quality Management (MPTQM).** According to USPS, this "program is designed to help businesses prepare mailings that meet or exceed Postal Service™ processing quality standards."

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Government and industry regulations can affect any business and create risk. However, using the right best practices, processes, technology and services can minimize these risks while creating more efficient mailing operations.

This resource is intended as a high-level look at mailing regulations in health care and best practices on how to comply.

For more information contact your Pitney Bowes representative
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