



Document Imaging

Technology To Assist With HIPAA Compliance

In a perfect world, healthcare wouldn't need the Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations to drive simplification, standardization, and privacy - there would be one out-of-the-box, best-of-breed HIPM solution to provide the technical, functional, cultural, and legal fixes to achieve compliance. Unfortunately, it's not that easy.

HIPAA doesn't mandate one specific solution to achieve compliance. However, while it is not a magic bullet, document imaging and workflow management is a viable solution that can assist healthcare organizations in numerous ways on their road to compliance.

Before HIPAA, both payer and provider healthcare organizations looked to document imaging and workflow management to streamline administrative processes and business operations, and to improve patient care and customer service throughout the enterprise. For over 10 years, document imaging and workflow management have delivered substantial benefits to areas such as medical records, patient financial services, and claims. Some of these benefits include: transforming space used for paper storage to patient care; reducing the number of AIR days; managing the privacy and access to patient information; providing that access in seconds not days; and reducing the costs of claims adjudication.

In light of HIPAA, healthcare organizations stand to gain tighter controls and administrative mechanisms using document imaging and workflow management. Think about the difference between the security of a stack of paper versus that of documents stored in an automated workflow system. A robust document imaging and workflow management solution can secure patient health information (PHI) in a variety of ways - based on user, document, role, and context criteria, to name a few. It also delivers enhanced reporting capabilities, audit trails, and redundancy and backup in the event of catastrophic data loss.

The same is true regarding the final privacy regulations. A robust document imaging and workflow management solution can assist the covered entity in providing the "minimum necessary" access to identify person or groups of persons who need access to PHI to carry out their duties. Features such as chart and document level security, census security, and other role and user-based controls can assist organizations in reducing the administrative burdens and costs associated with making determinations for non-routine disclosures of PHI. For providers, document imaging will ensure that consent and authorization forms are not lost or misplaced; a significantly higher risk that exists in the paper world. The final privacy rules require that a covered entity must document and retain any signed consent forms for six years.

Much needs to be done within the HIPM arena and there remain many unknowns. We do know that document imaging and workflow management in the healthcare enterprise will assist in moving you toward compliance. .

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