

Privacy and Access Odds & Ends: “Leaving Voicemail Messages for Patients” Edition



The Concern...

- The *Health Information Act* (HIA) is a piece of legislation on PEI that governs the collection, access, use, and disclosure of personal health information (PHI).
- Leaving a voicemail for a patient/client/resident with too much information creates a risk of unauthorized disclosure of their PHI.
- The risk is that the message may be received by someone other than the intended recipient. This could be because the voicemail is shared with someone else, or a wrong number was used. A wrong number may occur for a variety of reasons, including that the patient has changed their phone number without updating their care provider, a data entry error, a system error, or a human error.
- Information about a person’s medical appointment is PHI, even if it is just their name, date and the time they have their appointment with a provider.
- You can prevent a privacy breach by not leaving too much information on a voicemail.

Sample Scripts:

#1: Hello, this is [Name] from [Health PEI or Practice]. If you could give me a call back at [Phone Number] that would be great. Thank you.

#2: Hi, this is [Name] from Health PEI. I’m just calling to remind you of your upcoming appointment on [Date] at [Time]. Please call me back at [Phone Number] if you have questions or need to cancel or reschedule.

Simple Tips & Tricks

- Keep messages vague and brief, do not include too many details.
- Create a simple script that can be used in order to prevent providing too many details in the message.
- Conduct all calls in a private room/space.
- Regularly confirm with patients their preferred mode of communication and correct phone number.
- Confirm that patients agree to receive voicemail.
- Consider that you only need to provide enough information to allow the patient to return your call; you should not leave test results or medical instructions for patients in a voicemail message.
- If you are still concerned or unsure after reviewing the request and speaking to the requestor, talk with your supervisor or reach out to the ATIP team at healthprivacy@ihis.org.

