

Privacy and Access Odds & Ends: Waiting Room Edition

WAITING ROOM CALL-OUT OPTIONS



- Ask the patient at check-in what name they want to be used to call out in the waiting room.
 - Call patients by first name only.
 - Approach the patient directly in the waiting room instead of calling out.
 - Use a number system (provide the patient with a number at check-in and call that number when it's their turn).
 - You can purchase a system or make your own (e.g. laminated numbers).
 - Handheld buzzer system (provide the patient with a handheld buzzer that will light up and vibrate when it's their turn).
 - Collect patient cell phone numbers at check-in and text when it's time for them to come in.
- ***Using a patient's full name (first name and last name) in a waiting room call-out has the greatest impact on the patient's privacy and is not recommended.*****

The Importance of Privacy

- As individuals, we all have a legal right to privacy. As health care workers, we have an obligation to keep the personal health information (PHI) and personal information (PI) of our patients, clients, and residents, confidential.



- The best practices for protecting privacy have changed and improved over time. The "Need to Know" way of thinking has become paramount. This concept recognizes that we shouldn't be sharing PHI (including with those in our workplace), without a valid reason for doing so.
- We've also learned that protecting the privacy of our patients can only be accomplished by implementing many different types of safeguards, including physical, technical, and administrative.
- An increased awareness and focus on the importance of privacy has shed light on areas where additional safeguarding may be needed. One example of this is our patient waiting rooms. PI and PHI are often discussed in these public areas; how can we ensure we are protecting the privacy of our patients in these more public settings?
- Remember, something as simple as using a person's name and the fact that they are being called into an appointment in a specific waiting room is a disclosure of their PHI.

Your Obligations

- We've identified some key obligations straight from Health PEI policies that you can apply to maintaining confidentiality in a waiting room setting. Check them out below!
- "Staff shall safeguard Personal Health Information (PHI) in oral form by taking reasonable steps to prevent overhearing of conversations with patients, clients or residents by other persons. Reasonable steps will vary dependent on the physical environment and the level of sensitivity of the PHI being discussed." (*Health PEI Privacy and Protection of PHI Policy*)
- "All health care providers, in partnership with the client and their family/ partner in care are required to confirm a patient's identity using two client identifiers prior to discussing and providing care, procedures or services for clients and for transfers between facilities, programs, or services." (*Health PEI Client Identification Policy*)



- "Every care or practice setting must establish two client identifiers to use consistently for client identification." (*Health PEI Client Identification Policy*)