



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS (OCR)

**HEALTH INFORMATION PRIVACY & SECURITY COMPLAINT**

YOUR FIRST NAME		YOUR LAST NAME	
HOME PHONE (Please include area code)		WORK PHONE (Please include area code)	
STREET ADDRESS			CITY
STATE	ZIP	E-MAIL ADDRESS (If available)	

**Are you filing this complaint for someone else?**  Yes  No  
 If Yes, whose health information privacy rights do you believe were violated?  
 FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_ LAST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

**Who (or what agency or organization, e.g., provider, health plan) do you believe violated your (or someone else's) health information privacy rights or committed another violation of the Privacy Rule or Security Rules?**  
 PERSON / AGENCY / ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS		CITY
STATE	ZIP	PHONE (Please include area code)

**When do you believe that the violation of health information privacy rights occurred?**  
 LIST DATE(S) \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe briefly what happened. How and why do you believe your (or someone else's) health information privacy rights were violated, or how another violation of the Privacy or Security Rules occurred? Please be as specific as possible.**  
 (Attach additional pages as needed)

**Please sign and date this complaint. You do not need to sign if submitting this form by email because submission by email represents your signature.**  
 SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE (mm/dd/yyyy) \_\_\_\_\_

Filing a complaint with OCR is voluntary. However, without the information requested above, OCR may be unable to proceed with your complaint. We collect this information under authority 45 CFR 160 & 164 issued pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. We will use the information you provide to determine if we have jurisdiction and, if so, how we will process your complaint. Information submitted on this form is treated confidentially and is protected under the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974. Names or other identifying information about individuals are disclosed when it is necessary for investigation of possible health information privacy violations, for internal systems operations, or for routine uses, which include disclosure of information outside the Department for purposes associated with health information privacy compliance and as permitted by law. It is illegal for a covered entity to intimidate, threaten, coerce, discriminate or retaliate against you for filing this complaint or for taking any other action to enforce your rights under the Privacy Rule. You are not required to use this form. You also may write a letter or submit a complaint electronically with the same information. To submit an electronic complaint, go to OCR's Web site at: [www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/index.html). To mail a complaint see page 2 of this form for the mailing address.

The remaining information on this form is optional. Failure to answer these voluntary questions will not affect OCR's decision to process your complaint.

Do you need special accommodations for OCR to communicate with you about this complaint? (Check all that apply)

- Braille     Large Print     Computer     Electronic Mail     TDD     Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Sign language interpreter (specify language): \_\_\_\_\_
- Foreign language interpreter (specify language): \_\_\_\_\_

If we cannot reach you directly, is there someone we can contact to help us reach you?

FIRST NAME		LAST NAME	
HOME PHONE (Please include area code)		WORK PHONE (Please include area code)	
STREET ADDRESS		CITY	
STATE	ZIP	E-MAIL ADDRESS (If available)	

Have you filed your complaint anywhere else? If so, please provide the following. (Attach additional pages as needed)

PERSON / AGENCY / ORGANIZATION / COURT NAME(S)

DATE(S) FILED	CASE NUMBER(S) (If known)
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To help us better serve the public, please provide the following information for the person you believe had their health information privacy rights violated (you or the person on whose behalf you are filing).

ETHNICITY (select one)      RACE (select one or more)

Hispanic or Latino       American Indian or Alaska Native     Asian       Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Not Hispanic or Latino       Black or African American     White       Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN (if other than English) \_\_\_\_\_

How did you learn about the Office for Civil Rights?

- HHS Website/Internet Search     Family/Friend/Associate     Religious/Community Org     Lawyer/Legal Org     Customer Resp Cntr     Employer
- Fed/State/Local Gov     Healthcare Provider/Health Plan     Conference/OCR Brochure     Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

To submit a complaint, please type or print, sign, and return completed complaint form package (including consent form) to the OCR Headquarters address below.

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
Office for Civil Rights  
Centralized Case Management Operations  
200 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Suite 515F, HHH Building  
Washington, D.C. 20201  
Customer Response Center: (800) 368-1019  
Fax: (202) 619-3818  
TDD: (800) 537-7697  
Email: [ocrmail@hhs.gov](mailto:ocrmail@hhs.gov)

**Burden Statement**

Public reporting burden for the collection of information on this complaint form is estimated to average 45 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering the data needed and entering and reviewing the information on the completed complaint form. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: HHS/OS Reports Clearance Officer, Office of Information Resources Management, 200 Independence Ave. S.W., Room 531H, Washington, D.C. 20201. **Please do not mail this complaint form to this address.**



## COMPLAINANT CONSENT FORM

The Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has the authority to collect and receive material and information about you, including personnel and medical records, when they are relevant to its investigation of your complaint.

To investigate your complaint, OCR may need to reveal your identity or identifying information about you to persons at the entity or agency under investigation or to other persons, agencies, or entities. In some circumstances, OCR may refer your complaint to another government agency, as warranted.

The Privacy Act of 1974 protects certain federal records that contain personally identifiable information about you and, with your consent, allows OCR to use your name or other personal information, if necessary, to investigate your complaint.

Consent is voluntary, and it is not always needed in order to investigate your complaint; however, failure to give consent is likely to impede the investigation of your complaint and may result in the closure of your case.

Additionally, OCR may disclose information, including medical records and other personal information, which it has gathered during the course of its investigation in order to comply with a request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may refer your complaint to another appropriate agency.

Under FOIA, OCR may be required to release information regarding the investigation of your complaint; however, we will make every effort, as permitted by law, to protect information that identifies individuals or that, if released, could constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

OCR will use any applicable protections in that law to safeguard information which could identify you, or other individuals, or that, if released, could constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. OCR may be required to release some information regarding the investigation of your complaint under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), however, information concerning your complaint which could reveal your identity is protected from disclosure to third party requesters under FOIA.

Please read and review the documents entitled [Notice to Complainants and Other Individuals Asked to Supply Information to the Office for Civil Rights](#) and [Protecting Personal Information in Complaint Investigations](#) for further information regarding how OCR may obtain, use, and disclose your information while investigating your complaint.

**In order to expedite the investigation of your complaint if it is accepted by OCR, please read, sign, and return one copy of this consent form to OCR with your complaint. Please make one copy for your records.**



- As a complainant, I understand that in the course of the investigation of my complaint it may become necessary for OCR to reveal my identity or identifying information about me to persons at the entity or agency under investigation or to other persons, agencies, or entities.
- I am also aware of the obligations of OCR to honor requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). I understand that it may be necessary for OCR to disclose general information which it has gathered as part of its investigation of my complaint, excluding personally identifiable information.
- In addition, I understand that, as a complainant, I may be covered by the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) regulations which protect any individual from being intimidated, threatened, coerced, retaliated against, or discriminated against because he/she has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in any mediation, investigation, hearing, proceeding, or other part of HHS's investigation, conciliation, or enforcement process.

**After reading the above information, please check ONLY ONE of the following boxes:**

**CONSENT:** I have read, understand, and agree to the above and give permission to OCR to reveal my identity or identifying information about me in my case file to persons at the entity or agency under investigation or to other relevant persons, agencies, or entities during any part of HHS' investigation, conciliation, or enforcement process.

**CONSENT DENIED:** I have read and I understand the above and do not give permission to OCR to reveal my identity or identifying information about me. I understand that this denial of consent is likely to impede the investigation of my complaint and may result in closure of the investigation.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Please sign and date this complaint. You do not need to sign if submitting this form by email because submission by email represents your signature.*

Name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_



## NOTICE TO COMPLAINANTS AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS ASKED TO SUPPLY INFORMATION TO THE OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

### Privacy Act

The Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. §552a) requires OCR to notify individuals whom it asks to supply information that:

— OCR is authorized to solicit information under:

- (i) Federal laws barring discrimination by recipients of Federal financial assistance on grounds of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, religion under programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including, but not limited to, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. §2000d *et seq.*), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. §794), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. §6101 *et seq.*), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §1681 *et seq.*), Sections 794 and 855 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. §§295m and 296g); and Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. §18116);
- (ii) Federal laws protecting rights of conscience and religious freedom in health and human services programs, such as Sections 1303(b)(4) and 1553 of the Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. §§18113, 18023(b)(4)), the Church Amendments (42 U.S.C. § 300a-7), the Coats-Snowe Amendment (42 U.S.C. §238n), the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (42 U.S.C. § 2000bb *et seq.*), and the Weldon Amendment (*e.g.*, Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2019, Pub. L. No. 115-245, Div. B., §507(d)), and applicable regulations;
- (iii) Titles VI and XVI of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. §§291 *et seq.* and 300s *et seq.*) and 42 C.F.R. Part 124, Subpart G (Community Service obligations of Hill-Burton facilities);
- (iv) 45 C.F.R. Part 85, as it implements Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in programs conducted by HHS; and
- (v) Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. §12131 *et seq.*) and Department of Justice regulations at 28 C.F.R. Part 35, which give HHS “designated agency” authority to investigate and resolve disability discrimination complaints against certain public entities, defined as health and service agencies of state and local governments, regardless of whether they receive federal financial assistance.

HIPAA Standards for the Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information (The Privacy Rule), 45 C.F.R. Part 160 and Subparts A and E of Part 164, Health Insurance Reform: Security Standards (The Security Rule), 45 C.F.R. Part 160 and Subparts A and C of Part 164, Breach Notification for Unsecured Protected Health Information (The Breach Rule), 45 C.F.R. Part 160 and Subparts A and D of Part 164, and Administrative Simplification: Enforcement, 45 C.F.R. Part 160, Subparts C, D, and E, which contains provisions relating to compliance and investigations, the imposition of civil money penalties, and procedures for hearings related to violations of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) (42 U.S.C. §1320d-2).



OCR will request information for the purpose of determining and securing compliance with the Federal laws listed above. Disclosure of this requested information to OCR by individuals who are not recipients of federal financial assistance is voluntary; however, even individuals who voluntarily disclose information are subject to prosecution and penalties under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 for making false statements.

Additionally, although disclosure is voluntary for individuals who are not recipients of federal financial assistance, failure to provide OCR with requested information may preclude OCR from making a compliance determination or enforcing the laws above.

OCR has the authority to disclose personal information collected during an investigation without the individual's consent for the following routine uses:

- (i) to make disclosures to OCR contractors who are required to maintain Privacy Act safeguards with respect to such records;
- (ii) for disclosure to a congressional office from the record of an individual in response to an inquiry made at the request of the individual;
- (iii) to make disclosures to the Department of Justice to permit effective defense of litigation; and
- (iv) to make disclosures to the appropriate agency in the event that records maintained by OCR to carry out its functions indicate a violation or potential violation of law.

Under 5 U.S.C. §552a(k)(2) and the HHS Privacy Act regulations at 45 C.F.R. §5b.11 OCR complaint records have been exempted as investigatory material compiled for law enforcement purposes from certain Privacy Act access, amendment, correction and notification requirements.

### **Freedom of Information Act**

A complainant, the recipient or any member of the public may request release of OCR records under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. §552) (FOIA) and HHS regulations at 45 C.F.R. Part 5. Generally, most records will be available only to the complainant if they are not privileged. Most or all records from a complaint file will be withheld to protect privacy.

### **Fraud and False Statements**

Federal law, at 18 U.S.C. §1001, authorizes prosecution and penalties of fine or imprisonment for conviction of "whoever, in any matter within the jurisdiction of any department or agency of the United States knowingly and willfully falsifies, conceals or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact, or makes any false, fictitious or fraudulent statements or representations or makes or uses any false writing or document knowing the same to contain any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or entry."



## **PROTECTING PERSONAL INFORMATION IN COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS**

To investigate your complaint, the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) will collect information from different sources. Depending on the type of complaint, we may need to get copies of your medical records, or other information that is personal to you. This Fact Sheet explains how OCR protects your personal information that is part of your case file.

### **HOW DOES OCR PROTECT MY PERSONAL INFORMATION?**

OCR is required by law to protect your personal information. The Privacy Act of 1974 protects Federal records about an individual containing personally identifiable information, including, but not limited to, the individual's medical history, education, financial transactions, and criminal or employment history that contains an individual's name or other identifying information.

Under the Privacy Act, OCR will disclose your name or other personal information with a signed consent from you, and only when it is necessary to complete the investigation of your complaint or to enforce civil rights laws or when it is otherwise permitted by law.

Consent is voluntary, and it is not always needed in order to investigate your complaint; however, failure to give consent is likely to impede the investigation of your complaint and may result in the closure of your case.

### **CAN I SEE MY OCR FILE?**

Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), you can request a copy of your case file once your case has been closed; however, OCR can withhold information from you in order to protect the identities of witnesses and other sources of information. Additionally, some records may be withheld to protect OCR's deliberative process privilege or any other legally protected privilege.

### **CAN OCR GIVE MY FILE TO ANY ONE ELSE?**

If a complaint indicates a violation or a potential violation of law, OCR can refer the complaint to another appropriate agency without your permission.

If you file a complaint with OCR, and we decide we cannot help you, we may refer your complaint to another agency, such as the Department of Justice.

### **CAN ANYONE ELSE SEE THE INFORMATION IN MY FILE?**

Public access to OCR's files and records is controlled by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Under FOIA, OCR may be required to release general information about this case upon public request. In the event that OCR receives such a request, we will apply every legal protection to information that identifies individuals.



If OCR receives protected health information about you in connection with a HIPAA investigation or compliance review, we will only share this information with individuals outside of HHS if necessary for our compliance efforts or if we are required to do so by another law.

**DOES IT COST ANYTHING FOR ME (OR SOMEONE ELSE) TO OBTAIN A COPY OF MY FILE?**

In most cases, the first two hours spent searching for document(s) you request under the Freedom of Information Act and the first 100 pages are free. Additional search time or copying time may result in a cost for which you will be responsible. If you wish to limit the search time and number of pages to a maximum of two hours and 100 pages; please specify this in your request. You may also set a specific cost limit, for example, cost not to exceed \$100.00. For details, see HHS's FOIA page.

If you have any questions about this complaint and consent package, please contact OCR at [www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/about/contactus/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/about/contactus/index.html).

*OR*

Contact the Customer Response Center at (800) 368-1019 (see contact information on page 2 of the Complaint Form).