

What is Protected Health Information (PHI)?

Protected health Information is (1) any individually identifiable health information transmitted or maintained in a medical record paper or electronic, or (2) designated data set that was created, disclosed, or used in the course of providing a health care service such as diagnosis, payment or treatment.

List of 18 Identifiers considered being PHI under HIPAA:

1. Names;
2. All geographic subdivisions smaller than a State, including street address, city, county, precinct, ZIP code, and their equivalent geocodes, except for the initial three digits of the ZIP code, if according to the current publicly available data from the Bureau of the Census:
 - (a) The geographic unit formed by combining all ZIP codes with the same three initial digits contains more than 20,000 people; and
 - (b) The initial three digits of a ZIP code for all such geographic units (1) The geographic unit formed by combining all ZIP codes with the same three initial digits contains more than 20,000 people; and
 - (c) The initial three digits of a ZIP code for all such geographic units containing 20,000 or fewer people is changed to 000;
3. All elements of dates (except year) for dates that are directly related to an individual, including birth date, admission date, discharge date, death date, and all ages over 89 and all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such age, except that such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 or older;
4. Phone numbers;
5. Fax numbers;
6. Electronic mail addresses;
7. Social Security numbers;
8. Medical record numbers;
9. Health plan beneficiary numbers;
10. Account numbers;
11. Certificate/license numbers;
12. Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers, including license plate numbers;
13. Device identifiers and serial numbers;
14. Web Universal Resource Locators (URLs);
15. Internet Protocol (IP) address numbers;
16. Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints;
17. Full face photographic images and any comparable images; and
18. Any other unique identifying number, characteristic, or code (note this does not mean unique code assigned by the investigator to code the data).