

Use and Disclosure of Protected Health Information (PHI) for Patient Appointment Reminders and Other Types of Messages

Patient Privacy laws allow health care entities to communicate with patients regarding their health care at their homes or other preferred locations. This includes leaving verbal messages for patients electronically (e.g. voice mail) or with individuals who may answer the phone (e.g. the patient's family member). However, to reasonably safeguard the patient's privacy, workforce members must take care to minimize the amount of PHI disclosed when leaving appointment reminders or other types of messages for patients. Outlined below are the best practices to use in these situations:

- When directed to voice messaging, provide your name, number, the UW Medicine entity from which you are calling and other information which is minimally necessary to confirm an appointment or request a return phone call.
- When you reach someone other than the patient at the patient's contact number, use professional judgment to determine the minimum necessary information to disclose and ensure that the disclosure is in the best interest of the patient.