

Protected Health Information (PHI)

The term “Protected Health Information” or PHI is used often in UW Medicine privacy policies. Protected Health Information is individually identifiable health information that is held or transmitted by UW Medicine. In addition to the individual’s own health information, individually identifiable health information includes information about a relative, employer or household member of a person seeking care. State and Federal health information privacy laws require UW Medicine to protect PHI. The information below will help you understand what information is included under the definition of PHI.

Protected Health Information (PHI) includes any information (verbal, paper or electronic) maintained or transmitted by UW Medicine that relates to:

- the past, present or future physical or mental health or condition of an individual; *or*
- the provision of healthcare to an individual; *or*
- the past, present or future payment for the provision of healthcare to an individual

and either identifies the individual or provides a reasonable basis to believe the information can be used to identify the individual. For example, a medical record, laboratory report, or hospital bill would be PHI because each document would contain a patient’s name and/or other identifying information associated with the health information.

PHI excludes individually identifiable health information in:

- Employment records held by a covered entity in its role as employer.
- Education records covered by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); *and*
- Records of students of post-secondary institutions which are exempt from FERPA because they are used exclusively for healthcare treatment.

* Release of education records that contain healthcare information are subject to Washington State Uniform Health Care Act protections (RCW 70.02) and other state laws governing confidentiality of health information. See WAC 478-140-018(1)(c)(B)(iv).

PHI elements that could be used to identify an individual:

1. Names	10. Account numbers
2. Geographic identifiers: All subdivisions smaller than a state, including street address, city, county, precinct, ZIP code, and their equivalent geocodes, except in certain situations.	11. Certificate or license numbers
3. Dates: All elements (except year) for dates that are directly related to an individual, including dates of birth, admission, discharge, death, and all ages or elements of dates for patients over 89.	12. Vehicle identifiers including license plates
4. Phone Numbers	13. Device identifiers and serial numbers
5. Fax numbers	14. URLs
6. Email addresses	15. IP addresses
7. Social Security numbers	16. Biometric identifiers
8. Medical record numbers	17. Face photographic images
9. Health plan beneficiary numbers	18. Any other unique identifier