

If You Believe There Is A Violation Of Privacy Rights—

For example, if a health care provider or health insurer

- denies you the right to ask to see and get a copy of your health records,
- fails to give you a notice telling you how your health information may be used, or
- does not protect your health information,

then you may file a complaint with OCR.

How Do You File A Complaint?

You can call OCR at 1-800-368-1019 and ask for a civil rights or a privacy complaint form. This call is free.

Or, you can find instructions on how to file a complaint on the OCR Web site. You can also get information on how to contact the OCR Regional Office that will look into your complaint.

- For a civil rights complaint:
Go to the OCR Web site at www.hhs.gov/ocr. Click on “How to File a Discrimination Complaint with the Office for Civil Rights.”
- For a privacy complaint:
Go to the OCR Web site at www.hhs.gov/ocr. Click on “How to File a Health Information Privacy Complaint.”

OCR cannot look into all civil rights or privacy complaints. If OCR is not authorized to accept your complaint, we will try to send your complaint to an agency that may be able to help you.



OCR

Office for Civil Rights



What If I Need More Information?

Please call 1-800-368-1019 toll-free.

You can learn more about civil rights and privacy rights at www.hhs.gov/ocr. This Web site has fact sheets and answers to “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs).

TDD: 1-800-537-7697
E-Mail: OCRmail@HHS.gov
Web Site: www.hhs.gov/ocr

We provide language assistance.
Services are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Protecting Your Civil Rights
in Health Care and Social Services
and Your Health Information
Privacy Rights



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



What Does OCR Do For You?

OCR is part of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS).

OCR enforces a number of civil rights laws and the Federal law that protects the privacy of health information.

OCR helps to protect you from unfair treatment, or discrimination, because of your race, color, national origin, age or disability. Some civil rights laws may also protect you from discrimination based on sex (gender) or religion.

OCR also helps to protect the privacy of your health information. Legal rules say who can look at and receive your health information, and also give you specific rights over that information. For example, you may have a right under the law to ask to see and get a copy of your health records.

What Health and Social Services Must Obey Civil Rights and Privacy Laws?

Civil Rights Laws

OCR helps to protect you from discrimination in health and social service programs that receive money or other assistance from HHS. Some of these programs may include:

- Hospitals, health clinics, nursing homes
- Medicaid and Medicare agencies
- Welfare programs
- Day care centers
- Doctors' offices and pharmacies
- Children's health programs
- Alcohol and drug treatment centers
- Adoption agencies
- Mental health centers

Privacy Law

OCR helps to protect the privacy of your health information held by certain health care providers and health insurers. Some of these providers and insurers may include:

- Doctors and nurses
- Pharmacies
- Hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes
- Health insurance companies
- Health maintenance organizations (HMOs)
- Employer group health plans
- Certain government programs that pay for health care, such as Medicare and Medicaid

What Does OCR Do To Protect Your Rights?

- OCR teaches health and social service workers about the civil rights and privacy laws that they must follow.
- OCR educates communities about civil rights and privacy rights.
- OCR looks into civil rights and privacy complaints to find out if there is discrimination or a violation of privacy rights and takes action to correct problems.

What Can You Do If You Believe Your Rights Are Violated?

You can file a civil rights complaint or a privacy complaint with OCR, or someone can file for you. If you want to file a complaint, you should file it within 180 days of when you believe your rights were violated.

If You Believe There Is Discrimination—

For example, if someone in a health or social services program

- denies you services or benefits,
- won't let you participate in a program,
- delays your services,

because of your

- race, color, national origin, disability, age, and sometimes sex or religion,

then you may file a complaint with OCR.