

HEALTH & SAFETY CODE
SUBTITLE I. MEDICAL RECORDS
CHAPTER 181. MEDICAL RECORDS PRIVACY
SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 181.001. DEFINITIONS. (a) Unless otherwise defined in this chapter, each term that is used in this chapter has the meaning assigned by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and Privacy Standards.

(b) In this chapter:

(1) "Commissioner" means the commissioner of health and human services.

(2) "Covered entity" means any person who:

(A) for commercial, financial, or professional gain, monetary fees, or dues, or on a cooperative, nonprofit, or pro bono basis, engages, in whole or in part, and with real or constructive knowledge, in the practice of assembling, collecting, analyzing, using, evaluating, storing, or transmitting protected health information. The term includes a business associate, health care payer, governmental unit, information or computer management entity, school, health researcher, health care facility, clinic, health care provider, or person who maintains an Internet site;

(B) comes into possession of protected health information;

(C) obtains or stores protected health information under this chapter; or

(D) is an employee, agent, or contractor of a person described by Paragraph (A), (B), or (C) insofar as the employee, agent, or contractor creates, receives, obtains, maintains, uses, or transmits protected health information.

(3) "Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and Privacy Standards" means the privacy requirements in existence on August 14, 2002, of the Administrative Simplification subtitle of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (Pub. L. No. 104-191) contained in 45 C.F.R. Part 160 and 45 C.F.R. Part 164, Subparts A and E.

(4) "Marketing" means:

(A) making a communication about a product or service that encourages a recipient of the communication to purchase or use the product or service, unless the communication is made:

(i) to describe a health-related product or service or the payment for a health-related product or service that is provided by, or included in a plan of benefits of, the covered entity making the communication, including communications about:

(a) the entities participating in a health care provider network or health plan network;

(b) replacement of, or enhancement to, a health plan; or

(c) health-related products or services available only to a health plan enrollee that add value to, but are not part of, a plan of benefits;

(ii) for treatment of the individual;

(iii) for case management or care coordination for the individual, or to direct or recommend alternative treatments, therapies, health care providers, or settings of care to the individual; or

(iv) by a covered entity to an individual that encourages a change to a prescription drug included in the covered entity's drug formulary or preferred drug list;

(B) an arrangement between a covered entity and any other entity under which the covered entity discloses protected health information to the other entity, in exchange for direct or indirect remuneration, for the other entity or its affiliate to make a communication about its own product or service that encourages recipients of the communication to purchase or use that product or service; and

(C) notwithstanding Paragraphs (A)(ii) and (iii), a product-specific written communication to a consumer that encourages a change in products.

(5) "Product" means a prescription drug or prescription medical device.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 924, Sec. 2.

Sec. 181.002. APPLICABILITY. (a) Except as provided by Section 181.205, this chapter does not affect the validity of

another statute of this state that provides greater confidentiality for information made confidential by this chapter.

(b) To the extent that this chapter conflicts with another law with respect to protected health information collected by a governmental body or unit, this chapter controls.
Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.
Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 924, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 181.003. SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY. This chapter does not waive sovereign immunity to suit or liability.
Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 181.005. DUTIES OF THE COMMISSIONER. (a) The commissioner shall administer this chapter and may adopt rules consistent with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and Privacy Standards to administer this chapter.

(b) The commissioner shall review amendments to the definitions in 45 C. F.R. Parts 160 and 164 that occur after August 14, 2002, and determine whether it is in the best interest of the state to adopt the amended federal regulations. If the commissioner determines that it is in the best interest of the state to adopt the amended federal regulations, the amended regulations shall apply as required by this chapter.

(c) In making a determination under this section, the commissioner must consider, in addition to other factors affecting the public interest, the beneficial and adverse effects the amendments would have on:

(1) the lives of individuals in this state and their expectations of privacy; and

(2) governmental entities, institutions of higher education, state-owned teaching hospitals, private businesses, and commerce in this state.

(d) The commissioner shall prepare a report of the commissioner's determination made under this section and shall file the report with the presiding officer of each house of the legislature before the 30th day after the date the determination is made. The report must include an explanation of the reasons for the determination.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 924, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

SUBCHAPTER B. EXEMPTIONS

Sec. 181.051. PARTIAL EXEMPTION. Except for Subchapter D, this chapter does not apply to:

(1) a covered entity as defined by Section 602.001, Insurance Code;

(2) an entity established under Article 5.76-3, Insurance Code; or

(3) an employer.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.
Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1274, Sec. 20, eff. April 1, 2005.

Sec. 181.052. PROCESSING PAYMENT TRANSACTIONS BY FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS. (a) In this section, "financial institution" has the meaning assigned by Section 1101, Right to Financial Privacy Act of 1978 (12 U.S.C. Section 3401), and its subsequent amendments.

(b) To the extent that a covered entity engages in activities of a financial institution, or authorizes, processes, clears, settles, bills, transfers, reconciles, or collects payments for a financial institution, this chapter and any rule adopted under this chapter does not apply to the covered entity with respect to those activities, including the following:

(1) using or disclosing information to authorize, process, clear, settle, bill, transfer, reconcile, or collect a payment for, or related to, health plan premiums or health care, if the payment is made by any means, including a credit, debit, or other payment card, an account, a check, or an electronic funds transfer; and

(2) requesting, using, or disclosing information with respect to a payment described by Subdivision (1):

(A) for transferring receivables;

(B) for auditing;

(C) in connection with a customer dispute or an inquiry from or to a customer;

(D) in a communication to a customer of the entity regarding the customer's transactions, payment card,

account, check, or electronic funds transfer;

(E) for reporting to consumer reporting agencies; or

(F) for complying with a civil or criminal subpoena or a federal or state law regulating the covered entity.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 181.053. NONPROFIT AGENCIES. The department shall by rule exempt from this chapter a nonprofit agency that pays for health care services or prescription drugs for an indigent person only if the agency's primary business is not the provision of health care or reimbursement for health care services.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 181.054. WORKERS' COMPENSATION. This chapter does not apply to:

(1) workers' compensation insurance or a function authorized by Title 5, Labor Code; or

(2) any person or entity in connection with providing, administering, supporting, or coordinating any of the benefits under a self-insured program for workers' compensation.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 181.055. EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLAN. This chapter does not apply to:

(1) an employee benefit plan; or

(2) any covered entity or other person, insofar as the entity or person is acting in connection with an employee benefit plan.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 181.056. AMERICAN RED CROSS. This chapter does not prohibit the American Red Cross from accessing any information necessary to perform its duties to provide biomedical services, disaster relief, disaster communication, or emergency leave verification services for military personnel.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 924, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 181.057. INFORMATION RELATING TO OFFENDERS WITH MENTAL IMPAIRMENTS. This chapter does not apply to an agency described by Section 614.017 with respect to the disclosure, receipt, transfer, or exchange of medical and health information and records relating to individuals in the custody of an agency or in community supervision.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 181.058. EDUCATIONAL RECORDS. In this chapter, protected health information does not include:

(1) education records covered by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. Section 1232g) and its subsequent amendments; or

(2) records described by 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g(a)(4)(B)(iv) and its subsequent amendments.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

SUBCHAPTER D. PROHIBITED ACTS

Sec. 181.151. REIDENTIFIED INFORMATION. A person may not reidentify or attempt to reidentify an individual who is the subject of any protected health information without obtaining the individual's consent or authorization if required under this chapter or other state or federal law.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 181.152. MARKETING USES OF INFORMATION. (a) A covered entity must obtain clear and unambiguous permission in written or electronic form to use or disclose protected health information for any marketing communication, except if the communication is:

(1) in the form of a face-to-face communication made by a covered entity to an individual;

(2) in the form of a promotional gift of nominal value provided by the covered entity;

(3) necessary for administration of a patient assistance program or other prescription drug savings or discount program; or

(4) made at the oral request of the individual.

(b) If a covered entity uses or discloses protected health information to send a written marketing communication through the mail, the communication must be sent in an envelope showing only the names and addresses of sender and recipient and must:

(1) state the name and toll-free number of the entity sending the marketing communication; and

(2) explain the recipient's right to have the recipient's name removed from the sender's mailing list.

(c) A person who receives a request under Subsection (b)(2) to remove a person's name from a mailing list shall remove the person's name not later than the 45th day after the date the person receives the request.

(d) A marketing communication made at the oral request of the individual under Subsection (a)(4) may be made only if clear and unambiguous oral permission for the use or disclosure of the protected health information is obtained. The marketing communication must be limited to the scope of the oral permission and any further marketing communication must comply with the requirements of this section.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.
Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 924, Sec. 6, eff. Jan. 1, 2004.

SUBCHAPTER E. ENFORCEMENT

Sec. 181.201. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF; CIVIL PENALTY. (a) The attorney general may institute an action for injunctive relief to restrain a violation of this chapter.

(b) In addition to the injunctive relief provided by Subsection (a), the attorney general may institute an action for civil penalties against a covered entity for a violation of this chapter. A civil penalty assessed under this section may not exceed \$3,000 for each violation.

(c) If the court in which an action under Subsection (b) is pending finds that the violations have occurred with a frequency as to constitute a pattern or practice, the court may assess a civil penalty not to exceed \$250,000.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 181.202. DISCIPLINARY ACTION. In addition to the penalties prescribed by this chapter, a violation of this chapter by an individual or facility that is licensed by an agency of this state is subject to investigation and disciplinary proceedings, including probation or suspension by the licensing agency. If there is evidence that the violations of this chapter constitute a pattern or practice, the agency may revoke the individual's or facility's license.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 181.203. EXCLUSION FROM STATE PROGRAMS. In addition to the penalties prescribed by this chapter, a covered entity shall be excluded from participating in any state-funded health care program if a court finds the covered entity engaged in a pattern or practice of violating this chapter.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1511, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 181.205. MITIGATION. (a) In an action or proceeding to impose an administrative penalty or assess a civil penalty for actions related to the disclosure of individually identifiable health information, a covered entity may introduce, as mitigating evidence, evidence of the entity's good faith efforts to comply with:

(1) state law related to the privacy of individually identifiable health information; or

(2) the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and Privacy Standards.

(b) On receipt of evidence under Subsection (a), a court or state agency shall consider the evidence and mitigate imposition of an administrative penalty or assessment of a civil penalty accordingly.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 924, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.