

**Alabama EHR  
Meaningful Use  
Incentive Payment  
Program**

**HEALTH INSURANCE PORTABILITY AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1996 (HIPAA)  
QUICK REFERENCE**

Every person involved in the health care industry is familiar with “HIPPA”, although the proper reference is “**HIPAA**”. While everyone may not know the exact provisions of the law, they do know that it requires them to protect an individual’s health care information. While HIPAA does indeed make that requirement, it does much more and impacts many aspects of the day-to-day operations and practices of all sectors of the health care industry.

In the simplest terms, there are two major parts to HIPAA:

- 1) The Privacy Rule – provides federal protections for individually identifiable health information and grants an array of rights to patients with respect to that information.
- 2) The Security Rule – specifies a series of administrative, physical and technical measures to be taken to safeguard electronic protected health information.

As a result of these two rules, those persons involved in the handling of protected health information must not only make sure that they do not personally mishandle a patient’s health information; but also make sure they adhere to the procedures put in place by their respective organizations regarding the use of computers and other electronic means of managing patient information. HIPAA also carries substantial penalties for breaches in securing protected health information.

HIPAA is enforced by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) within the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The correct identification of the law is: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, Public Law 104-191. It was passed by the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress and is dated August 21, 1996. For detail on the law’s provisions and its enforcement, you may refer to the links below to the DHHS/HIPAA website.

1. Broad overview of health information privacy:  
<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/index.html>
2. Understanding HIPAA:  
<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/index.html>
3. Summary of HIPAA’s Privacy Rule:  
<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/summary/index.html>
4. Summary of HIPAA’s Security Rule:  
<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/srsummary.html>
5. HIPAA – FAQs: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/fag/index.html>