HIPAA
Monthly Alert
SEPTEMBER 2019

Three university hospital employees fired for violation of patient privacy on Facebook:

A university hospital fired three employees over alleged HIPAA violations of a patient's protected health information (PHI) impermissibly disclosed and published on Facebook. Just like Liberty, this university hospital provided training to all employees to make them aware of their responsibilities to patient privacy and HIPAA requirements. Despite training, an employee violated the privacy of a patient by disclosing their name, age, HIV status, employment information, and surgical history to a colleague. The employee shared the information with a friend who uploaded the PHI to Facebook. Another employee allegedly played no part in the violation, but was aware of the disclosures and failed to report the incident to their supervisor. The hospital took prompt action when the HIPAA violations were discovered and terminated all three employees for violating HIPAA rules and the hospital's code of conduct. The hospital is taking steps to ensure similar incidents are prevented and is working with the patient to resolve the privacy violation.

Employee responsibilities to protect health information is clear in Liberty's SOPs and training:

The motives of the employees are unclear, but their responsibilities to ensure patient privacy was protected had been clearly explained and there can be no doubt that they were aware that their actions were in breach of federal regulations.

In addition to losing their jobs, the matter has been referred to the U.S. Attorney's Office and criminal charges for the HIPAA violation are being considered.

The privacy violation should serve as a warning to all healthcare employees about the potential repercussions of HIPAA violations, and that the failure to report a HIPAA violation by a co-worker can result in loss of employment.

If a HIPAA violation is discovered in your program/unit, report the incident immediately to your supervisor or Liberty's privacy officer to ensure prompt action is taken to limit any harm.

Reference: https://www.hipaajournal.com/3-employees-fired-for-violation-of-patient-privacy/

**Please look for next month's HIPAA alert delivered through your email.
You can also find the HIPAA monthly alerts on Employee Self Service (ESS).**

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