

Data Privacy & HIPAA

Caregiver Learning Guide

How to use this guide: Read it alongside the lesson video, keep it as a quick reference on the job, and review it before taking the lesson quiz.

What you'll learn

- Identify what information is private and must be protected
- Apply the 'need-to-know' principle when accessing or sharing data
- Handle records, devices, and passwords securely
- Know when sharing private information is allowed

Privacy is a right and a law

The people you support have a legal right to privacy, protected by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (Minn. Stat. ch. 13) and the federal HIPAA law. Protecting their information is part of your job.

What counts as private data

- Personal information — name, address, family, identifying details
- Health and medical — diagnoses, medications, treatment, behavior
- Financial — income, benefits, bank and spending details
- Service records — support plans, progress notes, assessments

Your responsibilities

- Need-to-know only — access and share only what your job requires
- Secure records and screens; log off when you step away
- No gossip — never discuss a person's information socially
- Protect devices; use passwords and never share logins

When sharing is allowed

You may share private information only when the person or their legal representative consents, with care-team members who need it to provide care, in a genuine emergency, or when the law requires it (such as reporting suspected maltreatment).

Phones and social media

Never photograph or post about the people you support — no photos, videos, names, or stories online, even without names. Keep personal phones out of care unless your agency's policy allows it.

If a breach happens: secure the information, report it to your supervisor immediately, and never try to hide it.

Legal references

Minn. Stat. ch. 13 (Government Data Practices Act) · federal HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, 1996) · Minn. Stat. 245D.04 & 245D.09.

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