



The Commonwealth and State legislation aims to protect the privacy of individuals especially in respect of their health information

WHAT TO DO – to ensure your practice meets the new legislative requirements

Provide information about privacy legislation for patients (including getting consent to collect health information, informing patients that information is being collected and why it is being collected, and a patient's right to access their own information) through

- *a poster displayed in your Reception area (see Resources section)*
- *brochures handed to patients*
- *a notice on your website*

Involve your co-workers and staff. Talk about office-wide practices that may need to be discussed to ensure privacy. Check that your collection, storage, use and disclosure of information processes protect personal information from misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure – for example, ensure

- *where possible, telephone conversations cannot be overheard*
- *paper files are not accessible to non-authorised persons*
- *computers are secured – for example*
 - *access to system (levels of privilege assigned)*
 - *passwords (ensure they are changed regularly)*
 - *screen savers (activate sufficiently quickly)*
 - *positioning of computer screens (so they cannot be read by unauthorised persons)*
 - *public access (including contractors eg IT repair/service personnel)*

Document any decisions you make about using or disclosing information for secondary purpose, for example *clinical audits, clinical trials*

When requested, **make information available** to another health service provider

Include an efficient and effective **complaints handling mechanism** that is well publicized in your practice (see Hotlines listed below)

Don't forget, there are **other laws** (not privacy related) that require or authorise a particular use or disclosure of personal information, that take precedence over privacy eg *notifiable diseases, mandatory reporting laws*

You may decide to appoint a **Privacy Officer** to manage all privacy issues, including patient requests for information