

## HIPAA refresher

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**Q** We recently tested a teenage patient for sexually transmitted diseases, and we have been trying to contact her with the results, with no luck. She doesn't want her parents to know. What should we do?

**A** HIPAA left issues involving minors and their health-care up to individual states. In many states, minors can consent for this type of testing without parental consent, and generally speaking, if a patient may consent for treatment, he or she may also consent for the release of that information.

To avoid a scenario such as this, providers would do well to discuss the process for notification of results and billing when seeing teenagers who ask them to not involve their parents.

In this case, if the results are positive, your state likely requires you to notify public health practitioners and they will follow up.

In the meantime, I might consider leaving a message for the patient at her school asking her to call the office. In all cases, good risk management requires careful documentation of the steps taken to inform any patient of his or her test results, especially if the results are abnormal. ■

*Editor's note: Chris Simons, RHIA, director of utilization management HIM and privacy officer at Spring Harbor Hospital in Westbrook, ME, provided these questions and answers. This information does not constitute legal advice. Consult your organization's legal counsel for answers to specific privacy and security questions.*

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