

HANDLING GENERAL MEDICAL RECORD REVIEWS

In order to obtain a variety of certifications and accreditations, managed care organizations, insurance companies, and other entities may need to conduct a review of how your practice manages its medical records. Typically these reviews focus on ensuring that information is complete and is kept in a standardized, compact format, with appropriate security mechanisms.

To cooperate with these reviews without compromising patient confidentiality or encumbering your practice with too much additional work, we recommend the following six steps:

1. Prepare a brief summary sheet of where and how you store medical records and other sensitive information, including details on the procedures you have in place to protect patient privacy.
2. Ask if a “dummy” record will suffice.
3. If not, make sure that you and your staff have sufficient advance notice to “cleanse” your medical records of all patient-identifying information prior to the review.
4. If the review is being conducted by a particular managed care organization, be sure to share only the records of those patients who are covered by that organization.
5. Do not allow the reviewing body to remove records from your office.
6. Obtain patient consent for the release of records, where appropriate, and keep these consents on file (see Appendix N).

If you are uncomfortable with any aspect of an on-site medical records review, contact the APA’s Practice Management HelpLine (hsf@psych.org or 800-343-4671).