

Ascott Transcription Service, Inc. HIPAA Compliance FAQ



Quality service... worldwide.

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About HIPAA

The Health Insurance Portability and Accessibility Act of 1996 (HIPAA) set forward a number of requirements for health care entities and their business associates. These requirements range from streamlining of administrative procedure to, most importantly, the protection of patient privacy rights. HIPAA and the subsequent Privacy and Security Rules will have an enormous impact on the health care industry, and therefore on ATS. This document shows how we at ATS have put forth strenuous effort to comply with HIPAA, and guard protected health information (PHI).

About ATS

Ascott Transcription Service, Inc. was founded in 1985, and is a member of both the American Association for Medical Transcription (AAMT) and the Medical Transcription Industry Alliance (MTIA). ATS follows the ethical guidelines of both professional organizations in the strictest sense. Additionally, ATS follows the standards outlined in *ASTM Standard Guide for Management of the Confidentiality and Security of Dictation, Transcription, and Transcribed Health Records*, (1998). These standards are stricter than the HIPAA requirements for business associates.

About this document

This document is designed in an FAQ format, and is designed to familiarize our clients and potential customers with Ascott's HIPAA compliance effort. Any further questions should be referred to Ascott at ats@ats-ascott.com, or 1-877-4-ASCOTT.

For further information about HIPAA, please see <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa2/>.

Abbreviations used in this document:

ATS	Ascott Transcription Service, Inc.
BA	Business associate
CE	Covered entity
FAQ	Frequently asked questions
FTP	File Transfer Protocol.
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.
IIHI	Individually Identifiable Health Information
PHI	Protected health information. Identifiable information about the patient, the patient's SSN number, the date of a patient's visit to a clinic, employer, address, etc.
VPN	Virtual Private Network

How does ATS comply with HIPAA standards?

Do your employees understand the privacy and security regulations and their obligations under the business associate agreement?

Understanding privacy and security regulations is essential for our employees. They receive training so that they may understand the privacy and security regulations outlined by ATS and by our individual clients. Upon employment, employees are required to sign a confidentiality statement, indicating that they understand the confidential nature of the work that ATS performs and the confidential nature of the documents provided to ATS by its clients. Employees further agree that they will not divulge patient information. The confidentiality statement is renewed annually.

Our Employee Handbook addresses privacy, confidentiality, and security. Employees are required to sign a statement once it is read. Our clients often require statements for employees working with their material. We comply strictly with these client requests and enforce all standards they require.

Regular meetings are held to brief our employees on new policies and requirements. Our HIPAA Task Force reviews new information and provides this to management on a regular basis; ad hoc meetings and bulletins keep our employees up to date.

How do you establish protocol to comply with other covered entities' privacy policies?

MTIA's *HIPAA Compliance Guide* has assisted us in preparing protocol and assessing our level of HIPAA compliance. The input from two internal HIPAA specialists is reviewed, ratified, and implemented by the management team. When negotiating/bidding for a contract with a covered entity, the requirements of their privacy policies are reviewed. New criteria are reviewed and implemented.

ATS strives to raise our current standard of excellence by evaluating our future clients' needs and staying up to date on our HIPAA responsibilities.

Do privacy and security policies and procedures exist?

Yes. Current policies and procedures affecting the privacy and security of PHI are reviewed regularly. Revisions to those policies are dated to reflect when the revision became effective. Policies are documented in:

The ATS Employee Handbook.

ATS Confidentiality Statement.

ATS Statement of HIPAA Compliance.

For more information about these documents, please contact ATS.

How have you, as a BA, changed operations to prepare for HIPAA?

Our office is secured and locked at all times. No PHI is exposed in public areas.

All employees have name badges and all network activity is logged.

Our courier service has been redesigned to better protect PHI.

A HIPAA Compliance Task Force has been instituted to train employees and review operations.

Policy is now to destroy or return all PHI to the responsible CE at the expiration of a contract.

How do you, as a BA, place limits on use or disclosure of PHI?

ATS requires all employees to sign a statement that they will only access PHI when it is required to do their job. Use or discussion of PHI unnecessary to job duties is strictly forbidden.

No hard copy of PHI will ever leave our site unless it is via courier service with the agreement of our client.

Employee ATS numbers appear on transcribed client documents.

How will you, as a BA, sanction an employee who has violated your privacy policies? What is your company's policy?

Employees who improperly use or disclose confidential information will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and legal action. ATS will be entitled to seek injunctive relief (i.e., a court order that requires an employee to comply with privacy issues). Furthermore at the time of initial employment each employee signs a statement, agreeing to pay ATS for all reasonable legal expenses it incurs as a result of individual violations.

Do you have an adequate training program reflecting the company's policies and procedures?

The HIPAA training program began at our annual meeting on December 21, 2001. New information is presented through a variety of means, such as ad hoc bulletins and presentations, regular training sessions, and online tutorials.

All new employees are given an Employee Manual containing pertinent information. Confidentiality agreements and statements confirming understanding of the Employee Manual are renewed annually.

SELECTED PRIVACY-RELATED PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

Use of PHI. Never use PHI for any purpose other than what is prescribed by our clients.

Access to the facility. Access into our facility is via locked doors. The access code is changed each time an employee leaves the company.

Badges. Employees are required to wear a photo ID badge on the ATS work site.

Office Space. The design of the office space separates visitors from areas of the office where PHI is stored and worked on.

Paper & PHI. All paper that contains PHI is shredded after it is no longer needed for business.

Computer Systems. Computer systems require passwords, updated quarterly. Upon termination, any employee access codes are deactivated. Computer-sharing programs are not permitted.

Internet. ATS hosts its own e-mail and FTP servers, and an encrypted VPN.

E-mails sent or received via ATS e-mail shall be business-related only. No personal use shall be allowed, or use of personal e-mail accounts while in the office.

PHI Transmission Protocol. All communication of PHI must be logged and approved. Disclaimer statements must accompany all transmissions, and transmission by e-mail must be encrypted.

Termination. Upon termination, employees are to return all confidential information within twenty-four hours. The employee shall also deliver to ATS a written statement certifying that all materials have been returned and that PHI has been swept clean from any medium used to store or process PHI (hard drives, CDs, etc.)

If you have any further questions or wish to speak with a representative of ATS, please contact us by e-mail (ats@ats-ascott.com) or by phone (1-877-4-ASCOTT).