

Misdirected Faxes

Janelle is a Medical Assistant who works in a busy UMG clinic. She receives a phone call from Lisa, an office assistant in a local physician's office. Lisa indicates that her office just received five faxed pages that include lab results, radiology reports and clinic progress notes on a patient that is not seen in that practice. She also tells Janelle that the office has received several misdirected faxes from various UConn Health departments over the past five days and has notified the sending department each time the error occurred. What should Janelle do?

There are several considerations when faxes are misdirected, whether received within or outside of UConn Health. The HIPAA Privacy Rules require that **any** misdirected fax sent from UConn Health be evaluated as a potential HIPAA Privacy breach, whether received within or outside of our institution.

Here are the actions Janelle should take:

- Thank Lisa for notifying her of the error, request that she return the fax as soon as possible, and obtain confirmation that Lisa will not use or further disclose the PHI received in error and will shred the original fax.
- Ensure that the fax is sent to and received by the intended recipient.
- Notify her supervisor of the occurrence.
- Report the situation to the Compliance Office as soon as possible.

Remember, misdirected faxes could end up anywhere, including in the hands of someone who could misuse the information. Faxing PHI outside of UConn Health should be reserved for situations in which the information is needed immediately to meet patient care needs. Outside faxes must be accompanied by the approved cover letter. Carefully enter the number of an intended recipient and verify the accuracy of the number before faxing. Areas using autofax technology must periodically verify that all speed dialed numbers are current and valid.

For more information, refer to UConn Health policy #2003-23 [Faxing of Protected Health Information](#) and the approved fax [cover letter](#).

Preventing misdirected faxes is an important way to protect the privacy of our patients' medical information and reduce the risk of privacy breaches.