## Access to Protected Health Information

All DPH workforce members are responsible to safeguard the confidentiality of each patient’s Protected Health Information (PHI). Violation for unauthorized access to a patient’s medical record will result in serious consequences if your job role does not require you to review the patient’s medical information.

### What Triggers a Privacy Breach?

- Accessing a patient’s medical information without an authorized reason.
- Accessing any (living or deceased) patient record out of curiosity or concern or for any unauthorized reason (example: accessing co-worker, friend, or famous person’s record without a written authorization).
- Accessing a former patient’s medical record, whom you may have previously treated, but are no longer part of his/her treatment team.
- Looking up identification information about a patient out of curiosity or for personal, non-work related reason.

### Things You Need to Know…

- You should limit the amount of information accessed or disclosed to only what is necessary to accomplish your job.
- Audits of access are conducted regularly on the electronic medical record systems (EMR).
  - Such as high profile patients who are admitted to the hospital.
- **Remember** being employed at DPH does not automatically give you authorization to access the patient’s EMR.
- If you access records for non-business purposes, corrective and disciplinary action may include loss of privileges, impact to your professional license, and separation from your employment at DPH.

### Report a Privacy Breach:

- **Report every potential Breach of Protected Health Information (PHI):**
  - Privacy Hotline: (855) 729-6040
  - Email: Compliance_Privacy@sfdph.org
  - Policy: [Reporting a Privacy Breach Policy](#)

The Privacy Office also provides consultation on all privacy related questions. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.