



For particularly needy or high-



for copies of medical records, but these may be in conflict with recent changes to Federal laws – the Federal (HIPAA) standard should be followed..) Since this is generally an uninsured service, reasonable attempts may be made on the part of the physician to collect the fee in advance. Nonpayment of the fee or any outstanding balance, however, is not a reason to withhold the information.

You may be obligated either to transfer medical records to another physician at a local address and phone number, or notify each patient that their medical records will be destroyed in (state specific) x years unless they obtain the records or request a transfer of the records to another physician within a reasonable time period.

Records must be stored in compliance with all regulations and in a place where they are safe from tampering, loss, access by unauthorized personnel, fire, or flood. In addition to the storage of records, remember that someone must be responsible for receiving authorized requests for the records, and release them in a HIPAA-compliant manner. Consider that you may reach a point where you are no longer willing or able to manage this requirement through the entire retention period. A records custodian can serve this purpose, but make sure they offer a Business Associate Agreement with their contract and their services fully comply with HIPAA. The HIPAA laws on charging patients and the response time for providing copies of records have changed recently, and failure to comply by either you or a records custodian you hire, can result in serious penalties to you.

Keep tax returns, personnel files, accounts payable invoices, contracts, and other financial records according to recommended guidelines (usually seven years, but some states vary).

Retain HIPAA documentation, such as acknowledgement of privacy notice, requests for amendments, and workforce training documentation, for six years.

Shred any paper records that qualify to be destroyed, or if using a professional to destroy your records, obtain certificates of destruction. Destruction can be by incineration, shredding, pulverization, or, in the case of computer media, reformatting or de-magnetization.

Accounts receivable – Several weeks before closing, tighten up collections as much as possible to reduce the need for collections after you close. Retain someone (an individual or agency) to collect the last accounts receivable. Alternatively, and less commonly in the medical field, you may be able to sell the remaining accounts receivable, at a discount, to a “factor” who will in turn attempt to collect them for his own account.

Malpractice insurance. Contact your professional liability carrier to arrange tail coverage to cover you for any events that may have occurred prior to closing the practice. Some carriers will provide a free retirement tail if you have been insured with them for 5 or more years. Your malpractice insurer can also be a resource for guidance on certain items, such as medical records retention and notification strategies.

Lease – Hopefully you previously negotiated a “release” clause in your lease in the event your practice went out of business. If so, make sure you now comply with all the stipulated obligations concerning advance notification to your landlord, etc. If there is no such clause

and the term of the lease runs longer than the practice will need the space, try to negotiate favorable terms with your landlord for terminating the lease.

Office furniture, supplies, and equipment

Furniture –

