

HIPAA Definitions and 18 Identifiers

Protected Health Information (PHI)

Information in any format that identifies the individual, including demographic information collected from an individual that can reasonably be used to identify the individual. Additionally, PHI is information created or received by a health care provider, health plan, employer, or health care clearinghouse; and relates to the past, present, or future physical or mental health or condition of an individual.

De-identified

Information that has certain identifiers (see “identifiers” below) removed in accordance with 45 CFR 164.514; no longer considered to be Protected Health Information.

(Note: Please be aware that individual participants may be identifiable by combining other items in the data even when none of the following 18 identifiers are present. Thus, a study may still contain personally identifiable data (PID) even after removing or never acquiring the identifiers listed below, and the investigator may still need to provide complete answers for the data security questions (Items 8-10) in the protocol.

Identifiers

Under the HIPAA Privacy Rule “identifiers” include the following:

1. Names
2. Geographic subdivisions smaller than a state (except the first three digits of a zip code if the geographic unit formed by combining all zip codes with the same three initial digits contains more than 20,000 people and the initial three digits of a zip code for all such geographic units containing 20,000 or fewer people is changed to 000)
3. All elements of dates (except year) for dates directly related to an individual, including birth date, admission date, discharge date, and date of death and all ages over 89 and all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such age (except that such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 or older)
4. Telephone numbers
5. Fax numbers
6. Electronic mail addresses
7. Social security numbers
8. Medical record numbers
9. Health plan beneficiary numbers
10. Account numbers
11. Certificate/license numbers
12. Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers, including license plate numbers
13. Device identifiers and serial numbers
14. Web Universal Resource Locators (URLs)
15. Internet Protocol (IP) address numbers
16. Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints
17. Full face photographic images and any comparable images
18. Any other unique identifying number, characteristic, or code (excluding a random identifier code for the subject that is not related to or derived from any existing identifier)