

Allegheny Health Network -- Patient Access API Education Materials

As healthcare providers, we are obligated to protect your privacy. You may be asked to provide your data to others. Please note that they do not have the same strict obligations.

Allegheny Health Network (AHN) is required to provide you with access to detailed information about your health history through a “Patient Access API (application programming interface).” You may access this information by using AHN’s patient portal (MyChart) or by downloading a third party application (App) on your smart phone, tablet, computer or other similar device. The information AHN will make available through the Patient Access API includes information we collect and maintain about you as part of our designated record set. **The information we will disclose through the Patient Access API may include information about treatment for substance use disorders, mental health, HIV status, and/or other sensitive information.**

It is important for you to understand that if you choose to use a third party App to retrieve information from AHN, the third party App you select will have access to *all* of your information made available through the Patient Access API. The App is most likely *not* subject to the rules and regulations established by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other privacy laws, which protect your health information. Instead, the App’s privacy policy will describe the ways in which the App will use, disclose, and possibly sell information about you. If you decide to use a third party App to retrieve your information from AHN through the Patient Access API, you should carefully review the privacy policy of any App you are considering using to ensure you are comfortable with that company’s privacy practices.

Things you may wish to consider when selecting a third party App:

- Will this App sell my data for any reason?
- Will this App disclose my data to third parties without my consent for purposes such as research or advertising?
- How will this App use my data? For what purposes?
- Will the App allow me to limit how it uses, discloses, or sells my data?
- If I no longer want to use this App, or if I no longer want this App to have access to my health information, can I terminate the App’s access to my data? If so, how difficult will it be to terminate access?
- What is the App’s policy for deleting my data once I terminate access? Do I have to do more than just delete the App from my device?
- How will this App inform me of changes in its privacy practices?
- Will the App collect non-health data from my personal device, such as my location?
- What security measures does this App use to protect my data?

- What impact could sharing my data with this App have on others, such as my family members?
- Will the App permit me to access my data and correct inaccuracies? (Note that correcting inaccuracies in data collected by the App will not affect inaccuracies in AHN's data set.)
- Does the App have a process for collecting and responding to user complaints?

If the App's privacy policy does not satisfactorily answer these questions, you may wish to reconsider using the App to access your health information. Your health information may include very sensitive details; you should be careful to choose an App with strong privacy and security standards and transparency around how your data will be collected, used, and disclosed.

Covered Entities and HIPAA Enforcement

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces the HIPAA Rules. As a covered entity under HIPAA, AHN is subject to its regulatory requirements, as are most other health care providers, such as hospitals, doctors, clinics, pharmacies, and dentists. You can find more information about your rights under HIPAA and who is obligated to comply with HIPAA here: <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-individuals/index.html>. [To learn more about filing a complaint with OCR related to HIPAA requirements, visit: https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/filing-a-complaint/index.html](https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/filing-a-complaint/index.html). You may also file a complaint with AHN by contacting 1-800-985-2050.

Apps and Privacy Enforcement

As noted above, a third party App generally **will not** be subject to HIPAA. An App that publishes a privacy policy is required to comply with those terms, but generally is not subject to other privacy laws. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) protects against unfair or deceptive acts and practices (such as an App that uses or discloses your data in violation of its privacy policy). The FTC provides information about mobile App privacy and security for consumers here: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0018-understanding-mobile-apps>.

If you believe an App inappropriately used, disclosed, or sold your information, you should contact the FTC. You may file a complaint using the FTC complaint assistant found here: <https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov/#crnt&panel1-1>.