

# Data Breach Risks and Reality

*October 2017*

*A survey by the Health Care Compliance Association*



*hcca-info.org*



## Executive Summary

Few things are more chilling to healthcare professionals than the specter of a data breach. It can be costly, difficult to clean up, and expensive. But how real is the risk? And what steps are healthcare entities taking?

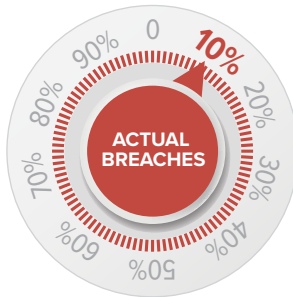
To gain insight into this issue the Health Care Compliance Association (HCCA) conducted a survey in October 2017. The data revealed that only a small minority of reported data incidents turn out to be actual breaches.

While that result is calming, some may find it concerning that much is still widely accessible, with the majority of respondents reporting that all credentialed providers have at least some access to patients' PHI. In addition, only about half monitor whether PHI for family members and co-workers is being accessed inappropriately.

## Key Findings

- **While all reports of data breaches should be taken seriously, relatively few are proven to be actual data breaches.** Fifty-eight percent of respondents reported that just 10% of reported incidents were confirmed as actual breaches. Another 18% reported that breaches were confirmed in 11–25% of cases. Another 10% reported that breaches were confirmed in 26–50% of cases. Another 8% reported that breaches were confirmed in 51–75% of cases. Finally, 6% reported that breaches were confirmed in 76–100% of cases.

### Reported incidents confirmed as actual breaches



### 58% OF RESPONDENTS



18%  
OF RESPONDENTS



10%  
OF RESPONDENTS



8%  
OF RESPONDENTS



6%  
OF RESPONDENTS

- **Sixty percent of the respondents reported that their institution provides open access to all credentialed providers on the medical staff.** Among them, 17% limit access to sensitive diagnoses. Approximately a third (31%) do not provide open access to all credentialed providers on the medical staff.

## Does your organization give credentialed providers open access to all patients' electronic PHI?



**43%**

PROVIDE OPEN ACCESS  
INCLUDING SENSITIVE DIAGNOSES



**17%**

PROVIDE OPEN ACCESS  
EXCLUDING SENSITIVE DIAGNOSES



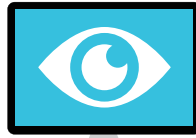
**31%**

DO NOT PROVIDE OPEN ACCESS

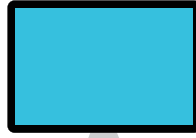
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- **Respondents were almost equally divided in their use of centralized surveillance software to monitor access to co-worker and family medical records.** Forty-seven percent of respondents say they use this software, while 48% report that they do not.

## Centralized surveillance software monitors access to co-worker and family medical records



47%  
USE



48%  
DO NOT USE

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## Conclusions/Implications

- **Relatively few incidents are actual breaches, which is reassuring.** However, given the potential consequences of a breach, this is no invitation to relax. Continued vigilance is highly warranted.
- **Access to PHI may need to be tightened.** The majority of institutions appear to provide access to all credentialed providers, warranting a need for effective manual and/or automated monitoring of appropriate and inappropriate access.
- **Monitoring software has yet to be fully deployed.** There remains room for employees to inappropriately access the PHI of their colleagues and family members, a situation containing significant risk. More, with software available to help prevent it, defending the organizations in case of such a breach is likely to be more difficult.

## Methodology

This survey was fielded in October 2017 by the Health Care Compliance Association. Responses were solicited via an email to contacts in the organization's database and using social media. Responses were collected anonymously using SurveyGizmo, a third-party, web-based survey provider. A total of 138 responses were received.

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