



Protecting Our Kids' Data Privacy Is Paramount

The topic of protecting our children's online data is of utmost importance. The internet is full of learning opportunities and entertainment for our kids, but the web is replete with daunting challenges for parents, teachers, governments, and the rest of society.

Watch the recording below for a deep dive into the topic.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIAAn_7YgOJI

Why do we care so much about the next generation's privacy? The National Cybersecurity Alliance (NCA) is a nonprofit, and we're on a mission to create a more secure, interconnected world for this generation and the next. We advocate for the safe use of all technology and educate everyone on how best to protect ourselves, our families, and our organizations from cybercrime. We have hundreds of free resources available to the public, along with plenty of articles for kids!

Our society is responsible for ensuring our children can navigate the digital landscape safely without collecting their data before they are old enough to apply for a credit card. We can set them up for success in our connected world and raise them to be responsible digital citizens who will shape the future.

Kids' Data Privacy Statistics

In 2022, some 1.7 million children fell victim to a data breach, meaning 1 in every 43 kids had personal information exposed or compromised,

according to a survey by Javelin Strategy and Research.

Almost 90% of Americans told the Pew Research Center they were concerned about social media platforms having the personal information of children. Most of us think parents hold the primary responsibility for their kids' online safety, but about 60% say tech companies are also partially responsible, and almost half think the government shares a responsibility as well. Like



other aspects of cybersecurity, everyone in society has a role to play.

How Can We Move Forward?

What can we all do to protect our kids' data? One key thing is staying positively engaged. If you're a parent, get in there with your kids, surf the web together, show interest in their online communities, and when they come across a game, website, or platform asking for their data, turn it into a learning moment. It's all about trust and open communication.

Supporting good choices is crucial. Give your kids a bit more online freedom as they prove

Continued on page 7

Letter From Your Advocate



Happy February!

The grandkids were fascinated to know that David and I have been to Punxsutawney, PA, on the way home from a computer convention in Chicago *many* years ago!

It wasn't on February 2nd but on a hot summer day when Phil would absolutely have seen his shadow! I don't know what that would have meant!

We ate lunch at the hotel where *Groundhog Day* was filmed and also got a glimpse of Phil where he lived at the Groundhog Zoo. It was a fun side trip to break up a long ride home!



To start this month, we took them to the Cape Codder Resort in Hyannis. We found that it's being turned into a Margaritaville location and the renovations have already started. The kids can't wait to see the results!

You'll be especially interested in Attorney Helene Horn Figman's article about terminating an employee on page 4. It's excellent information that will keep you out of trouble. And, we hope that you never have to use it!

Steve Dubin of PR Works gives easy-to-follow advice to help you find new patients on page three. "Outflow = Inflow" I always say.

See page six for "**Is it Insurance Fraud?**" Attorney Brian Hatch's article that could let you rest easier when defending treatment decisions when they are made in good faith and in accordance with professional standards.

Finally, we're rooting for Annette Bening and her Oscar nomination for **Nyad**.

In 2014, we had the honor of meeting Diana Nyad at an IT conference. Her motivational talk, less than a year after she swam from Cuba to Key West, was the highlight of the conference! **What courage!**

We hope that your February is filled with lots of good memories from the past, and in the making!



Good Advertising and Patient Growth Should Not Be Like Pulling Teeth

Is finding new patients like pulling teeth?

Pardon the pun; I couldn't control myself.

Yes, running a dental practice requires wearing many hats. Finding ways to attract new patients can be the tipping point.

Having worked directly with numerous dentists, I'd like to share some quick PR/Advertising suggestions that can move the needle for you.

Existing patients are your BEST source for referral sources. They already know, like, and trust you. Gently remind them via in-office signage, E-newsletter notes, advertising promotional items, etc.

Google Reviews – Google values its own reviews higher than others. These reviews not only help new patients decide, but are highly effective in generating SEO (Search Engine Optimization). Thus, you need to develop a simple plan to ask for Google Reviews and ask again.

e-Newsletter – A homegrown, monthly E-newsletter is essential to remain top of mind. Don't go with generic copy. Include a local patient story, holiday reference, and/or personal tips.

Smiling Neighbor Award – Recognize a good deed in your region. Share it with the press, post it on your website and social media, and include it in your e-newsletter.

Social media – Post smiling patient photos, oral hygiene tips, community activities, staff celebrations. Post not only to your social media pages, but branch out to other community pages that reach an entirely new audience.



Timely news – Provide useful tips to the press. Help kids manage candy at Halloween. Christmas considerations. Valentine's alternatives. There are many topics that can resonate with the local press and your audience.

Keep your website up to date and fresh. Add relevant content regularly. Keep your staff section current. Make it easy to navigate and find the details someone is looking for.

Every Door Direct Mail, a U.S. Postal Service program, helps you reach specific carrier routes and at a significant discount. Postage is about half the standard price, and there is no cost for the mailing list. An oversized postcard is required and really stands out.



Steven V. Dubin is the founder of PR Works, a full-service public relations firm that helps dental practices develop and orchestrate a consistent marketing program often including news releases, e-newsletters, social media content, informational speaking engagements and other ways to create meaningful connections.

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AVOIDING KNEE-JERK REACTIONS

I commonly receive calls from employers seeking to terminate an employee *immediately*, meaning that same day or the next day. Why? Some say that they just can't take a particular employee situation anymore and they just want it over.

I am asked, "Can I do that?" My answer is, "It depends." Let's consider the nature of the problem.

Is it truly an immediate or urgent situation? Has something happened that particular day that dictates the employee shouldn't be in your workforce (or on your premises)? If there was conduct of an extremely serious nature that could harm your business, then immediate action is most likely in order.

However, consider the more common scenarios: an employee is annoying and getting under their supervisor's skin, an employee has made a minor mistake, or the new team leader doesn't think an employee is a good fit and wants to put in "their own people." Do any of these situations truly warrant a termination the same day or the next day?

When told to think about the matter of termination and advised to review their documentation, employers will refer to "at-will" employment and their belief that no documentation is required. While it is true that documentation is not legally required in order to terminate in most situations, it is also true that for every rule

there are exceptions when it comes to protecting your business.

For example, if an employer is proposing to terminate a pregnant employee on the spot because of one mistake, a more careful analysis



of the situation is warranted. That termination could certainly be misinterpreted by an outside entity (including a state agency) as being related to the employee's pregnancy, despite the good faith non-discriminatory reason of the employer. Was any other employee terminated on the spot for the same or similar mistake? It would be prudent to have some documentation.

Or, another common situation: Employee "A" is a longtime employee and stellar performer under a prior supervisor, but a new supervisor wants him out ASAP after just a week of working with him. Take a breath. Cooler heads should prevail. Thorough consideration of the employee's performance reviews and what he continues to bring to the table would be

appropriate in lieu of a rash termination.

One might consider having the new supervisor engage in an initial meeting with those on the team. Informing employees of his expectations and any new procedures that will be implemented is only fair. Then, if the new supervisor finds that Employee "A" is still not meeting expectations or following the changed procedures, termination is certainly an option.

For all decision making relating to the employment status of your staff, think about the fact that these employees will be completely blindsided if there hasn't been any discussion of expectations or even a simple conversation where a review of the job description takes place.

To avoid knee-jerk decisions, maintaining best practices is in order. More effective communication is a start. Have you told an employee that what they are doing is not meeting your expectations? If you've "mentioned" it verbally, did you follow up with a brief e-mail to ensure that the discussion was understood?

Business owners and managers are busy and they complain, with good reason, that they do not have the time to go through various steps of discipline. The good news is that there isn't a requirement of particular steps. Progressive discipline, in a particular order of verbal warning,

written warning, final warning, suspension, etc., is not required by any state or federal law for the small or mid-sized private business owner. (This type of progressive discipline is usually set forth in union contracts.)

Employers do not need to have elaborate page-long documentation regarding every employee mistake or misstep. Any format will do. A few lines explaining the nature of your dissatisfaction is sufficient IF it is properly communicated to the employee. Communication is the key, and it shouldn't feel punitive to the recipient. You'll have better results if the matter is briefly explained and offered as a way to assist and correct, rather than punish.

If you need some pointers, obtain professional advice. Wrongful discharge and discrimination complaints can be costly, so exercise caution when taking personnel actions.

Finally, getting back to "I need to terminate this employee tomorrow," if that is indeed warranted, remember that Massachusetts' law requires an employer to provide the employee with their last paycheck (including accrued unused vacation) on the date of termination. Also, issuing a properly worded termination letter is usually a good practice, as it provides the employer and the employee with documentation regarding the date of separation and other termination factors.

Attorney Helene Horn Figman combines specialized legal knowledge in employment law with the skills and perspectives uniquely suited to Human Resources Consulting. www.figmanlaw.com

Information about her anti-harassment and anti-discrimination education programs can be found at www.workplaceawarenesstraining.com

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Is it Insurance Fraud?

Have you received a request for dental records of patients as a result of an insurance “utilization review” or audit?

Originally it can seemingly be just a administrative task of producing about thirty patients’ dental records over a certain period of time such as two years.

As many dentists have gone through the process, it can be a nerve-racking period of many undeserving allegations resulting in a costly return of monies for treatment already rendered and pre-approved by insurance companies. The letters from the insurance reviewers, who often have little dental training, can be intimidating. But are the allegations of “insurance fraud” they often claim justified?

Allegations of insurance fraud imply a criminality on behalf of dentists, which does not correspond with actual definitions of what is considered fraud.

“Fraud” requires an intent to deceive, and unless there was an intentional misrepresentation or falsification of records to gain benefits at the expense of insurance companies, it should not be alleged as criminal.

Unfortunately, insurance companies are private entities that enforce their own rules, so they get to decide whether submissions meet their standards for accuracy. Going beyond that power to allege illegality, however, requires a burden of proof of intent that is a much higher standard to meet.

Insurance companies are perfectionists when it

comes to judging how complete a dental record must be, since, of course, deciding that a dental record is not complete enough to meet their standards makes them money by forcing refunds.

Though dentists should be advised to make their treatment notes as complete as possible, insurance companies often treat any amendments to the dental record to explain the reason for the treatments rendered as “alterations” of the record, which they claim are violations of the Massachusetts Dental Regulations requirement of requiring making a “complete record” under the Content of Patient Record section of those regulations. 234 CMR Section 5.14.

Actually, the American Dental Association advises dentists in a section of a legal advisory manual entitled *Is it OK to Alter a Patient Record?* of the exact process of what to do and what not to do when it is necessary to correct a patient record, such as not using whiteout, and signing and dating any amendment that is used to update a record at a later date.

Of course, once again insurance companies are in the driver’s seat with regard to amendments when demanding reimbursements, with only contemporaneous notes allowed to be considered when reviewing treatment notes. They view with extreme skepticism if not dismissing altogether amendments made after the treatment date.

Some conclusions are made during audits that could be determined to justifiably indicate possible actual insurance fraud, and this coincides



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as a reason for denial retroactively. Insurers often cite in their reviews that erosion, abrasion attrition, or cosmetic reasons are not sufficient to justify onlays or crowns.

They do not allow payment for those procedures if less-expensive amalgam or resin restorations could be used.

Often the x-rays submitted to insurers do not make clear the fractures of decay weighed by the dentist in making these decisions, so it is important to note these in the treatment record.

with the legitimate function of insurance audits to prevent insurance fraud and abuse.

Some of those situations involve “upcoding” or billing for more-expensive treatment than is provided, billing for treatment not rendered, and treatment provided by an auxiliary above the limits of his or her license. Insurers often cite overtreatment or “lack of dental necessity”

These judgments are often very conservative when made by an insurance company during an audit, but since they make money for the insurers, it is often difficult to fight, and it is akin to fighting city hall. But is important that dentists not be intimidated by allegations of insurance fraud when defending their treatment decisions when they are made in good faith and in accordance with professional standards.

Protecting Our Kids is Paramount!

(continued from front page)

they can handle it responsibly. And let’s not forget about cybersecurity – keep those computers protected with the latest software updates, because, let’s face it; the online world is like a constantly changing game.

Review privacy settings together. Make it a family decision. Teach your kids to think critically about what they see online, and remind them that what goes on the internet can stick around forever.

A Goal for Society

Protecting children’s data privacy is a collective imperative. By reaching for this goal, we work to safeguard our kid’s innocence, foster digital citizenship, and cultivate a future generation capable of responsible online engagement. We can work together to build a society where trust, integrity, and ethical behavior prevail.



By shielding children from potential harm, we fortify the foundation of a safer internet for all. By prioritizing kid’s privacy, we champion a shared commitment to nurturing a culture where

every child can explore, learn, and connect online without compromise.

When we have a goal to protect children’s data privacy, we make an investment in a better, more responsible digital society for everyone. By reading this, you show that you share that goal, and we’re ecstatic to see how much you all care. Let’s get to work!

Source: <https://staysafeonline.org/resources/protecting-our-kids-data-privacy-is-paramount/>

In This Issue:

- **Good Advertising and Patient Growth Should Not Be Like Pulling Teeth**
- **Protecting Our Kids' Data Privacy Is Paramount**
- **Termination — Avoiding Knee-Jerk Reactions**
- **Is It Insurance Fraud?**
- **And MORE!**

This newsletter was thoughtfully edited by Susan Rooks, the Grammar Goddess, so we can look and sound as smart as we are.

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