



Frequently Asked Questions Independence Mental Health Institute (MHI) Missing Computer Back-up Tape

Q: What happened?

A: On April 30, 2013, an MHI employee noticed that a back-up tape used in a computer system was not in its normal location. Although the computer system is no longer used for patient records or employee information, the historical data had never been purged from the computer system and continued to be backed-up on a monthly basis.

A thorough physical search has been conducted of the offices and storage areas where the tape should have been located or might have been misplaced, and employees have been working to determine why the tape is not where it should be. Unfortunately, the back-up tape remains missing.

Analysis of the situation suggests that the tape may have been misplaced and has not yet been found or that it was mistakenly destroyed. The computer system requires the use of specialized equipment that is no longer serviced by the manufacturer so unauthorized access to the data on the tape would be unlikely. However, because the possibility of an information breach cannot be entirely ruled out, MHI is notifying affected individuals in accordance with legal requirements.

Q: Why was there a delay between the incident and notifying me that this happened?

A: MHI began an investigation on April 30, 2013, which included the following:

- A physical search of the facility to determine the current whereabouts of the back-up tape
 - Employee interviews to determine how the back-up tape might have been misplaced from its storage location or otherwise mishandled
 - A review of the lists of impacted individuals, including the types of information that is likely included on the missing back-up tape
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Q: I received a letter that said my personal information may have been exposed. What does that mean?

A: MHI cannot be totally certain that the back-up tape could not be used to retrieve personal information stored in the historical files on the tape. It is highly likely that the back-up tape was misplaced and may still be located, was accidentally destroyed, or was inadvertently thrown away.

The files on the back-up tape contained information and identifiers about employees such as:

1. Name
2. Mailing address
3. Social Security Number

The files on the back-up tape contained information and identifiers about patients such as:

1. Name
 2. Mailing address
 3. Phone number
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4. Date of birth
5. Social Security Number
6. Medical diagnosis code

None of the computer files included any bank information. Due to the circumstances of the incident, the possibility that your information has been accessed or misused is minimal. Per Iowa Code 715C and under a Federal Law known as HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), MHI must notify individuals when their personal information has been unsecured or potentially exposed.

Q: How many people are impacted by this incident?

A: It is unlikely that any information was used improperly, but MHI cannot be certain that the back-up tape could not be used. Thus MHI is sending letters to approximately 8,000 individuals who have been employed by a DHS facility or have been a patient of MHI.

Q: What can I do to protect myself from identity theft?

A: If your personal information was possibly exposed as a result of this incident, you will receive a letter with instructions on how to receive one year of free credit monitoring services from Experian, a global leader in the credit monitoring field. This service includes daily credit monitoring, alerts of key changes to credit files and identity theft insurance. Potentially affected individuals will be able to enroll in this free service through Experian until September 30, 2013.

Q: Should I close my bank account or other accounts (like credit cards)?

A: No account number information was contained on the missing back-up tape. The decision to close accounts is a personal decision that should be made based upon your individual circumstances or concerns.

Q: What is MHI doing to address this issue?

A: MHI has already taken the following steps in light of this incident:

- Removing all data that is not currently used from the computer system in question and back-up tapes used in order to eliminate the unnecessary retention of personally identifiable information
- Reviewing policies and procedures on handling back-up tapes and strengthening control over the processes

MHI is addressing the concerns of potentially affected individuals by:

- Sending a notification letter to each person potentially affected by this incident
- Offering free credit monitoring for all individuals receiving a notification letter
- Activating a toll-free hotline; individuals may call 800-447-1985 for more information about the data breach between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

Iowa Concern Hotline: 800-447-1985