

PRIVACY INCIDENTS

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees and contractors have a legal obligation to protect Veteran and VA employee personal information. Any suspected breach of privacy information must be immediately reported to your Privacy Officer (PO). It is important that we all know how to report privacy incidents or violations when they occur.



What is a Privacy Incident?

A privacy incident is any event that has resulted in, or has the potential to result in, unauthorized access to, or disclosure of, VA sensitive personal information. This includes both personally identifiable information (PII) and protected health information (PHI), whether physical or electronic, in a manner not permitted under the applicable confidentiality provisions.

Examples of suspected incidents that should be reported by VA employees and contractors include:



Finding VA sensitive papers on a copier.



Finding loose mailing labels on the ground that are addressed to patients.



A VA Employee or contractor posting a Veteran's PII or PHI on social media.



VA employee or contractor discussing sensitive information in a public environment.



Finding a folder that contains personally identifiable information or protected health information.

How to Report a Privacy Incident

Step 1: Contact your Privacy Officer

Report the privacy incident to your Privacy Officer (PO) immediately upon suspicion via encrypted email or phone.

- » To find your Privacy Officer, access the [PO Locator Tool](#).
- » If it is after hours follow your administration-specific guidelines as well as emailing or leaving a voicemail message for your Privacy Officer. For example, those who work in VHA can also report after hour incidents to the Administrator of the Day (AOD)/Designee.



Step 2: Provide as much detail regarding the incident

Details may include:

- » Caller's name
- » Phone number
- » Office (location)
- » Date of incident
- » What was lost, compromised, or disclosed?
- » What happened?



If you have any additional questions about privacy incidents, contact your local PO or [VA Privacy Service](#) at (202) 273-5070 or via email privacyservice@va.gov.