

**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**  
**WESTERN STATE HOSPITAL**  
9601 Steilacoom Blvd. S.W., Lakewood Washington, 98498-7213 MS W27-19

November 15, 2017

We regret to inform you that your protected health information (PHI) was shared without proper authorization. On September 20, 2017, a staff member inadvertently sent an email with your PHI to an incorrect email address. The incident was reported that same day. As a result, PHI identifying you may have been viewed by someone not authorized to see it. Because the program serving you is covered by the HIPAA Privacy Rule, we are notifying you of the breach as required by that rule in 45 CFR 164.404.

Specifically, the following items of PHI may have been exposed:

- Name
- Date of Admission to Western State Hospital (WSH)
- WSH Medical Record Number
- Date of birth
- Diagnosis of infection

We are extremely sorry for this situation and understand it may cause concern. We try very hard to earn your trust, and that includes protecting sensitive information about you. We take client confidentiality very seriously.

There are important things for you to know:

The incident occurred when a WSH staff member was sending a spreadsheet to another staff member who requested the information. The infection prevention employees use the spreadsheet in order to create infection prevention approaches at the hospital. When attempting to send the e-mail, the staff member misdirected the e-mail to the private e-mail address of an individual who had previously been offered employment at the hospital, but does not work at the hospital currently. WSH was able to contact the recipient and the recipient confirmed that the e-mail and attachment containing PHI was deleted.

As a result of this incident, we are requiring the staff member involved to receive further training and close supervision while handling confidential information. We also implemented new procedures to further restrict access to patient information maintained by the hospital. We strive to protect all of our client data and regret any upset to you.

## **What You Can Do**

We do not think that the health information shared is sufficient for someone to steal your identity or impact your credit. However, if you are concerned, you can find information on actions you can take to protect yourself on the websites of the Washington State Office of the Attorney General at: <http://www.atg.wa.gov/identity-theftprivacy> and for the Federal Trade Commission at: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/>. We will tell you if we receive any more information that shows your credit or identity may be at risk.

If there is anything we can do to assist you or if you have questions, please contact

Sincerely,

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