Can organizations use texting to communicate patient care information and orders?

Any examples are for illustrative purposes only.

Yes, healthcare organizations that implement a secure texting platform (STP) may text patient care information and orders among members of the care team. While computerized provider order entry (CPOE) remains the preferred method of order entry for providers, organizations are permitted to text orders via an STP that can transfer the information into the electronic health record (EHR).

Organizations that choose to use texting for patient information and orders are required to do the following:

- Implement an STP that meets the requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Security Rule, the HITECH Act Amendment 2021, and the CMS Conditions of Participation addressing medical records. The STP must be secure, encrypted, ensure the integrity of author identification, and minimize risks to patient privacy and confidentiality.
- Implement policies and procedures to routinely assess the security and integrity of the STP.
- Confirm that texted orders transmitted via the STP are dated, timed, authenticated, and promptly placed in the medical record.
- Make sure that the information transmitted into the EHR is accurately written, promptly completed, properly filed and retained, and accessible.

CMS revised its position on the use of texting in a February 8, 2024, memorandum stating that texting patient information and orders is permissible in hospitals and critical access hospitals if accomplished through a HIPAA-compliant STP and in compliance with the Conditions of Participation at 42 CFR 482.24 and 41 CFR 485.638.

Additional Resources:
CMS: Texting of Patient Information and Orders for Hospitals and CAHs

Last updated on April 04, 2024 with update notes of: Reflects new or updated requirements

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