



Texting  
the Right Way  
With RingRx



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This guide does not constitute legal advice. Please consult with your own legal counsel for proper standards and practices.

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## BACKGROUND

HIPAA is a federal regulation that covers many aspects of patient health confidentiality. Our guide is meant as one source of information to help you understand some aspects of HIPAA.

RingRx provides services to be used in the course of delivering healthcare. RingRx takes every precaution, where required by law, to protect data on or within its platform.

Sending information to devices outside of RingRx, including texting to personal cell phones, is not a protected service. This is because patient data on the receiving device is no longer within our service platform. Therefore, it's beyond our ability to control or protect. Sending information to devices outside of RingRx should be done only with a sound understanding of limitations under the law.

## RINGRX TEXTING

Texting can be used to help improve operational efficiency and improve the patient experience. Let's take a look at the two types of texting features we offer.

## TEXTING BETWEEN RINGRX USERS

**Texting between RingRx users is secure.** For example, texting between a provider and a nurse, both of whom are RingRx subscribers, provides adequate security of protected health information (PHI) and is therefore in compliance with HIPAA. RingRx encrypts all data stored in our platform. Any messages that arrive on the device are protected with your credentialed log-in to the app. It's acceptable to discuss patient care between users.

## TEXTING WITH PATIENTS

**Texting with patients is not secure.** Texting with patients is not secure because the patient's cell phone is outside of RingRx's platform. Therefore it is not possible to encrypt or secure the information on their cell phone or on the network services between RingRx and the patient, including the patient's cell phone service provider.

The Department of Health and Human Services, Joint Commission has issued a clarifying statement on texting: "All health care organizations should have policies prohibiting the use of unsecured text messaging from a personal mobile device for communicating protected health information."

This makes it clear that PHI should not be communicated to a patient's mobile device. Learn more about the HHS position [here](#).

As a result of HHS, Joint Commission's position, texting outside of the RingRx platform is not covered by our Business Associate Agreement.

The regulation does not prohibit sending texts that do not contain PHI. Messages without PHI include information about appointments, directions, and other routine business matters.

## NEXT STEPS

- If you have any uncertainties, consult your attorney before texting patients.
- Review your compliance policies to make sure the practice of texting is covered and explains what's acceptable and what's not.
- Obtain consent from patients that want to communicate by text.
- When you communicate with patients by text, only discuss topics that do not contain PHI. Examples: appointments, directions and other routine non-medical matters.