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Release of Information in California: Coroner's Office

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E-book Series, 6 of 12

The Release of Information (ROI) in California is a series of 12 E-books that will help you navigate and understand the complex state and federal laws, as well as best practices related to managing and releasing protected health information. The ROI E-book series contains content that falls under HIPAA, federal regulations, and is specific to California state laws.

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California Health Information Association
1915 North Fine Avenue, Suite 104
Fresno, California 93727-1565
T: (559) 251-5038
F: (559) 251-5836
E-mail: Info@CaliforniaHIA.org

For more information, visit www.CaliforniaHIA.org

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Marta De La Torre, MBA, RHIA, CHP, has over 25 years of health care experience, primarily in the health information management profession. She is a Registered Health information Administrator, certified in health care privacy and a former instructor of coding and reimbursement at Fresno City College Health Information Technology program, Fresno California and Mesa City College in San Diego, California. Marta is a past Board member of the California Health Information Association and served on numerous association committees both at the state and national levels. She is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives and the Healthcare Finance Management Association.

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Each ROI E-book includes an overview of the topic and extensive references. **Self Assessment Quizzes** are designed in multiple-choice and true/false format, and assess your understanding of the subject matter. A link to the Quiz is provided with each purchased E-book, and corrected answers will be displayed so you can receive automatic feedback.



Upon completion of the Self Assessment Quiz, a **Certificate of Completion (CEU)** will be made available to download and print. You will not be able to access the Certificate after exiting the Quiz, so be sure to download it immediately and retain as evidence of the earned continuing education.

Product Code	Release of Information in California:	CEU's Offered
E-book 001	Introduction **	Two
E-book 002	General Releases	Two
E-book 003	Medical Records and the Court System	Three
E-book 004	Workers Compensation	Three
E-book 005	Elder, Dependent Adult and Child Abuse	Two
E-book 006	Coroner's Office	Two
E-book 007	Public Health Agencies	Two
E-book 008	Business Associates	Two
E-book 009	Government Agencies	Two
E-book 010	Inmates	Two
E-book 011	Law Enforcement	Two
E-book 012	Special Health Records	Two

** CHIA recommends you read the *Release of Information in California: Introduction* E-book first. This E-book is offered at no charge and includes the "Glossary of Terms" that is used in all subsequent ROI E-books.

Additional CHIA Resources

To view sample pages or purchase these E-books, or to view more details about CHIA's publications and Webinar Replays, visit www.CaliforniaHIA.org/Resources

Forward

The purpose of this E-book is to provide accurate and authoritative information on proper and adequate disclosure of health information. The California Health Information Association (CHIA) is not engaged in rendering legal services, and providing legal advice is beyond the scope and intent of the E-books.

Release of Information in California: Coroner's Office

This E-book will assist the student in understanding federal privacy laws (HIPAA) release of protected health information (PHI) to coroner's office and California state laws regarding the functions of the agencies, what PHI may be released upon request, whether a signed authorization for release of information is necessary and what state regulation apply in this context. The E-book will assist the student in understanding federal privacy laws (HIPAA) regarding release of protected health information (PHI) may be released upon request, whether a signed authorization for release of information is necessary and what state regulations apply in the context.

Student Learning Outcomes and Objectives

Upon completion of the *Release of Information in California: Coroner's Office* E-book, students will be able to:

- Articulate the importance of releasing patient-specific health information according to current laws and regulations.
- Understand and appreciate the complexities and responsibilities inherent to releasing protected health information.
- Understand the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of patient records and protected health information (PHI).
- Utilize resources to maintain current competencies and keep abreast of changing requirements.
- Define the basic terms associated with patient privacy and release of patient information.
- Describe federal and state legislation regarding patient privacy and release of information.
- Differentiate between the different state of California and federal laws regulating release of patient-specific information and apply them appropriately in all situations.
- Understand the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of patient records and protected health information (PHI) and what PHI may be released upon request from/to the coroner's office.
- Describe federal and state legislation regarding patient privacy and release of information as it relates to the duties of the coroner's office.

Release of Information in California: Coroner's Office

Duties of the coroner

In the State of California, the office of the Coroner is an elected position. According to the state of California Health and Safety Code regulations §27491 et al, "the duty of the coroner is to inquire into and determine the circumstances, manner, and cause of all violent, sudden, or unusual deaths including:

- Unattended deaths;
- Deaths wherein the deceased has not been attended by a physician in the 20 days before death;
- Deaths related to or following known or suspected self-induced or criminal abortion;
- Known or suspected homicide, suicide, or accidental poisoning;
- Deaths known or suspected as resulting in whole or in part from or related to accident or injury either old or recent;
- Deaths due to drowning, fire, hanging, gunshot, stabbing, cutting, exposure, starvation, acute alcoholism, drug addiction, strangulation, aspiration, or where the suspected cause of death is sudden infant death syndrome;
- Death in whole or in part occasioned by criminal means;
- Deaths associated with a known or alleged rape or crime against nature;
- Deaths in prison or while under sentence;
- Deaths known or suspected as due to contagious disease and constituting a public hazard; deaths from occupational diseases or occupational hazards;
- Deaths of patients in state mental hospitals serving the mentally disabled and operated by the state Department of Mental Health;
- Deaths of patients in state hospitals serving the developmentally disabled and operated by the state Department of Developmental Services;
- Deaths under such circumstances as to afford a reasonable ground to suspect that the death was caused by the criminal act of another; and any deaths reported by physicians or other persons having knowledge of death for inquiry by coroner.

The scope of the Coroner's responsibility gives the office a wide range of responsibility and accountability to the public. Although the duties of the Coroner's Office may vary from state to state, many of the duties listed above are similar. As such, the federal government, in the promulgation of the HIPAA privacy regulations recognized the variability of duties in the differing states as well as the need of the Coroner's Office to carry out their duties without requiring an authorization for release of information from the next of kin.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

The HIPAA regulations regarding release of information to the Coroner's Office are found under (CFR § 164.510(e)) as follows: