HIPAA
COMPLIANCE:
RESPONDING TO REVIEWS

Dos:
- Show appreciation for all feedback and keep it anonymous.
- Use language that doesn't acknowledge the reviewer was a patient to protect their privacy.
- Take the conversation offline by following up privately with the reviewer.
- Focus on the positive aspects and demonstrate a commitment to improving patient experience.
- Use templates to create responses to common scenarios with the help of your legal and compliance team.
- Screen your reviews for HIPAA compliance, especially if you stream them from CAHPS surveys on your website.

Don'ts:
- Don't delete reviews unless they contain profanity or slander.
- Don't alter content or acknowledge or repeat PHI.
- Never disclose additional PHI in your response, and never acknowledge the reviewer is a past or present patient.
- Don't email a patient without their consent. Many states require healthcare providers to obtain written consent from patients before communicating with them electronically.

Here are a few examples showing how to respond in a compliant manner:

Example review: *"Dr. Dentist is the BEST! She treats my 5-year-old son so well that he LOVES to visit the dentist. I had a cavity filled during my last visit and the doctor was so gentle; it didn't hurt at all. Our entire family loves Dr. Dentist and we highly recommend her!"*

- **BAD** response: "We're so glad you enjoyed your experience with us and look forward to seeing you again soon!"
- **GOOD** HIPAA-compliant response: "We aim to deliver the best care to patients and love to hear positive experiences! Thanks for sharing this feedback!"
- **Why** it works: The response doesn't directly confirm the reviewer is a patient.

Example review: *"I had to wait more than an hour to be seen, and the front desk lady was rude and didn't seem concerned with my long wait at all. When I finally saw the dentist, he only spent a few minutes with me and seemed rushed."*

- **BAD** response: "We're sorry you had a bad experience with our team during your appointment and we'd love the opportunity to make it right."
- **GOOD** HIPAA-compliant response: "When scheduling, it's our policy to allow plenty of time with the doctor so we can keep our schedule running on time. However, because of emergency situations, it is possible to be behind schedule occasionally. We appreciate your feedback and are committed to providing the best patient care; please call us at [phone number] so we can ensure a better experience next time."
- **Why** it works: The content of the response is generic and focuses on the practice's policies. It doesn't confirm the reviewer is a patient. It also provides an opportunity to takes the conversation offline.

Roadside