



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

VA North Texas Health Care System Announces Compliance with HITECH Act Transparency Requirements *Eligible Veterans Have Received Information in Mail*

DALLAS – VA North Texas Health Care System (VANTHCS) is responding to requirements in the new HITECH Act. HITECH stands for the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act. The Act is part of The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, which is also referred to as the “stimulus bill.”

To comply with the law’s requirement to disclose potential privacy breaches of protected health information, the local VA health care system reports a binder and clipboard containing patient names, social security numbers and dates of birth of approximately 4,038 outpatients from February 1 through April 23 were recently found to be missing from a secured-access laboratory area.

The staff continues to search all areas for the binder and clipboard. Medical center officials say there is no reason to believe any malicious activity resulted from the incident, but took precautionary steps to rectify any potential problems from the situation. Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service is no longer using log sheets or binders to track patient workload.

Arrangements were made with Equifax Personal Solutions to help protect these Veterans’ identities and credit information at no cost to them for one year. The affected Veterans were sent information on how to enroll in the credit monitoring service and encouraged to do so.

Anyone concerned that their privacy may have been violated can also find information on preventing identity theft on the Federal Trade Commission web site at

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/consumers/consumer-publications.html>.

/ ADD ONE / Patient Privacy

Complying with the HITECH Act, VANTHCS is sending this news release and will submit information about this breach to the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) for publication on its web site. The HITECH Act requires health care providers covered by a patient privacy law to send news releases on certain breaches affecting 500 or more people that occurred since September 23, 2009.

VA is committed to protecting Veterans, their families and employees, and is constantly reviewing its systems designed to protect private information. Mandatory privacy training is also conducted annually for all employees.

For additional information, contact Privacy Officer Cheryl Johnson, 214 857-1432.

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