

# Preparing For HIPAA Audits

## Expert Offers Timely Tips

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Privacy and security specialist Phyllis Patrick offers practical tips on preparing for the upcoming federal HIPAA compliance audits.

One important [HIPAA](#) audit preparation step is to conduct an annual **self-audit for compliance** with the HIPAA privacy and security rules, Patrick says.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights plans to launch one or more [pilots of HIPAA auditing methods](#) later this year. It remains unclear when the formal HIPAA audit program, which was mandated under the [HITECH Act](#), will begin. Nevertheless, Patrick stresses that healthcare organizations and their business associates should be preparing now.



In an interview following her presentation at the National HIPAA Summit, Patrick:

- Stresses that an **annual self-audit** should look at every aspect of HIPAA compliance, including: who has access to patient information, what physical security measures are in place and whether a comprehensive risk assessment needs updating.
- Advises organizations to make sure they have all necessary technical controls in place to support a comprehensive security program, and not just HIPAA compliance.
- Notes that organizations should make sure that all their HIPAA compliance steps are **well-documented** because auditors will ask for documentation.
- Suggests that those with limited budgets should at least conduct a narrow audit of records access, based on a sampling of users; **implement encryption for high-risk devices**, such as laptops; and make sure staff members are trained on privacy and security policies and procedures.

Patrick is president of [Phyllis Patrick & Associates](#), which provides security, privacy and compliance advisory services to the health care industry.