

About Apple Valley
Medical Center

Established in 1974, Apple Valley Medical Center (AVMC), based in Apple Valley, MN, has grown with the surrounding community into one of the largest family practices in the south metropolitan area. Today, AVMC is staffed by twelve family practice physicians, several urgent care physicians and 165 employees. AVMC employs 26 medical records personnel, overseeing the clinic and 24-hour urgent care, emergency room, lab and X-ray services.

About HIPAA

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, also known as HIPAA, requires the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop standards and requirements for the maintenance and transmission of any health information that identifies individual patients. These standards are designed to protect the security and confidentiality of electronic health information and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the healthcare system. All healthcare organizations maintaining or transmitting electronic health information must comply with HIPAA, including health plans, healthcare clearinghouses, and healthcare providers.

Because HIPAA is an enterprise-wide issue, there are legal, regulatory, process, security, and technology aspects to each proposed rule that must be carefully evaluated before an organization can begin its implementation plan.

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HIPAA will have a major, ongoing impact on healthcare providers in that significant resources will be required to implement the regulations, some degree of information technology retooling will be needed, transactions will need to be standardized, and security and privacy regulations must be overhauled in order to be HIPAA compliant.

Getting up to Speed

"Apple Valley Medical Center initially sent out a letter to vendors last year," says compliance officer Adrienne Zarn. "Over the past few months I've spent several hours getting up to speed on HIPAA and expect this to increase over time." Zarn is confident AVMC is on the right path. Although they're still in the assessment phase, Zarn will begin implementing HIPAA compliant procedures and processes soon. "Others I speak with are just becoming aware of what HIPAA will mean to their practices."

"I supervise a staff of 34," notes Zarn. "Over the next year, 165 employees will need to be educated, trained, and retrained in HIPAA compliant procedures. I have a big job ahead of me," says Zarn. "We all do."

A Myriad of Options

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has estimated the cost to implement HIPAA's privacy regulations alone to be \$3.8 billion over the next five years. Implementing all of HIPAA could cost \$17.6 billion, according to the DHHS. Meanwhile, Gartner Healthcare Industry Research Advisory Services estimates that the average cost for HIPAA compliance for hospital systems and medical practices with at least thirty physicians, would be an estimated \$3.1 million. "There are a virtually unlimited number of solutions out there," says Zarn, "but many of them are cost prohibitive or simply too unreliable." Zarn estimates that an on-site consultant could cost \$150 or more per hour. "We can spend our money more effectively elsewhere."

Consultant-in-a-Box

Zarn first heard about HIPAAnswers™ through her supervisor Jon Pedersen. Pedersen attended a conference sponsored by the Minnesota Healthcare Network (MHN). Pitched as a consultant-in-a-box approach to HIPAA compliance, HIPAAnswers seemed to be just what AVMC needed. "While we weren't about to spend thousands of dollars on a consultant, we also recognized the importance of getting HIPAA right the first time. The more I learned about HIPAAnswers, the more convinced I was that it contained everything we needed – including access to experienced healthcare consultants – but without the price tag."

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"HIPAA regulations contain the most comprehensive set of rules ever imposed on the healthcare system," says Zarn. "There are lots of resources available online, but it can quickly become overwhelming. The great thing about HIPAAnswers is it's all right there. Most people in my position simply don't have the time to look through thirty-plus web sites just to answer one question."

About HIPAAnswers

HIPAAnswers assists healthcare organizations in efficiently and cost-effectively complying with federal HIPAA regulations by navigating users through the education, assessment, planning, implementing, and audit and enforcement processes. HIPAAnswers is the first complete software tool to incorporate everything users need to comply – saving the typical group practice more than 80% of the cost of an equivalent assessment and compliance effort performed by an outside consulting firm. HIPAAnswers helps users understand the regulations by providing useful suggestions and advice for complying with them. "Much as Quicken TurboTax® guides you through tax preparation, HIPAAnswers walks organizations through the entire compliance process," says Scott Thiele, President of Hard Lake, Inc., creator of HIPAAnswers.

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HIPAAnswers was created by a team of consultants who specialize in the healthcare industry and specifically in HIPAA compliance. The product is filled with an ever expanding knowledge database, ready-to-use templates, and helpful suggestions from other users. Team leader Dirk Niles has more than fifteen years experience in implementing technology in a variety of healthcare environments. "We took a 'consultant-in-a-box' approach to developing HIPAAnswers. Unlike other products, HIPAAnswers is both wide and deep, covering compliance

in a coordinated way across across rule sets," says Niles. "The product, which is continually evolving as the HIPAA knowledgebase expands, is packed with information gleaned from our collective experiences."

The web-enabled product, available online through a secure website, is designed for use by solo and group physician practices, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, pharmacies, vision centers, and other organizations involved in providing patient care or maintaining patient data.

Contact Information

For more information on HIPAAnswers, visit the company online at www.hipaanswers.com, email sales@hipaanswers.com, or call us toll-free at 1-866-326-6785.