



College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia

Professional Standards and Guidelines

Privacy Legislation for the Private Sector

On January 1, 2004, private physicians' offices, medical diagnostic facilities, and non-hospital medical surgical facilities in British Columbia became subject to privacy legislation, the [Personal Information Protection Act](#) (PIPA).

The new privacy legislation governs how private sector organizations handle personal information. Its general purpose is to ensure that the collection, use or disclosure of personal information about an individual does not occur without that individual's consent unless the information falls within specific exceptions. It also gives an individual the right to review and ask for corrections to his or her personal information.

Physicians should note that PIPA applies to the collection, use, disclosure, and care of personal information of patients as well as non-patients, such as employees and volunteers.

It is our expectation that the new privacy legislation will not impact significantly on the practice of our registrants. Physicians have always been obligated to maintain strict confidentiality regarding patient information. Since 1998 physicians have been subject to the College's privacy guidelines as set out in the *Privacy Code for Private Physicians' Offices in BC* which embodies the same privacy principles. PIPA does not require express consent for health care purposes or for other consistent purposes; instead, implied consent remains the norm. PIPA does, however, impose other requirements on physicians' offices. The College, together with the British Columbia Medical Association (BCMA), has developed information outlining these requirements. In that regard, we urge registrants to visit the website of the BCMA to review a document titled [Ten Steps to Help Physicians Comply with PIPA](#). This document has also been provided to our registrants by mail or email by the College and the BCMA.

For more information on PIPA, go to:

BCMA:

- Privacy Toolkit
<https://www.doctorsofbc.ca/resource-centre/physicians/managing-practice/privacy-toolkit>

Information Policy and Privacy Branch:

- Personal Information Protection - Private Sector Privacy Legislation
http://www.cio.gov.bc.ca/cio/priv_leg/pipa/index.page
- Personal Information Protection - Implementation Tools
http://www.cio.gov.bc.ca/cio/priv_leg/pipa/impl_tools/tool_index.page

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