**HIPAA App Security for Mobile**

According to an email on 18th of August, 2016 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Office for Civil Rights (OCR), small breaches by covered entities and third parties like business associates and subcontractors will now be deeply scrutinized. Effective from August 2016, breaches resulting from poorly secured Protected Health Information (PHI) are investigated under Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). This also means that entities need to cater to HIPAA app security for mobiles and report any resulting small breaches.

OCR has been investigating and providing assistance to breaches that affect more than 500 individuals. The regional offices of OCR had the choice whether to investigate small breaches (breaches that affected less than 500 individuals) or not at their own discretion. Though there is no public record on the percentage of small breaches investigated and assisted by OCR, it is known that it received more than 230,000 reports on small breaches from September 2009 to June 2016. During the same time period, large breach reports received by OCR were estimated to be 1600 approximately.

To ensure HIPAA app security for mobiles, regional offices of Health and Human Services will decide if they have to investigate a reported breach or not. Their decision will be based upon the following factors:

* Breach size
* Certain aspects related to the breach such as, inappropriate disposal or theft of unencrypted PHI, or detection of undesirable intrusion into the network.
* Volume and nature of sensitivity of PHI data
* Occurrence of similar concerns resulting from breach reports by covered entities or business associates in the past
* Absence of sufficient data on small breaches for comparing a covered entity or business associate to its likes.

This initiative will allow OCR to understand what usually results in breach of unsecured PHI data and how it relates to HIPAA compliance issues. Covered entities and third parties now have increased responsibility of ensuring HIPAA app security by not only reporting small breaches but also preparing themselves to respond to investigations with supporting documentation of corrective actions. Furthermore, they also need to show record of updated risk analysis and management plan. Those who do not report any incidences of small breaches will also be taken notice of, and in that case, they will need to provide proof of not discovering any breaches despite having an effective system for breach detection in place.