

Smart Glass Use in Office and HIPAA Concerns

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Whether you love or detest new technology, we all understand that the technology will move forward with or without us. One of the newer technologies to enter into mainstream public use are smart glasses. Smart glasses look like regular frames but have technology built-in with such features as hands-free audio, cameras, small displays in the lens, or a combination of these features. Any secret recordings in an office setting can jeopardize patient privacy and violate HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) standards. Wearable technology is becoming quite discreet and difficult to spot.

More than nine million pairs of smart glasses have been sold since the announcement of the collaboration between Meta and Ray-Ban in early 2025. Providers must consider what their policies will be on the use of smart glasses and other wearable audio and/or video technology in their offices and would do well to consider the HIPAA and patient privacy implications before an issue arises. There are several factors to consider when creating such a policy.

How do smart glasses work: Most smart glasses connect via Bluetooth to a smart phone. Smart glasses incorporate a wide-angle camera, some type of open-ear audio ability, and hands-free, voice control allowing a user to secretly and silently capture interactions occurring around them.

Overall HIPAA Considerations: All employees and offices are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of a patient encounter remain private and HIPAA compliance remains intact. Any recordings of patients and patient encounters, and particularly the potential for secret recordings, can interfere with the normal interactions between providers and patients. Even more serious would be the live-streaming of such encounters.

Other Legal Considerations: While a patient recording their own health care encounter does not fall within the definition of a HIPAA violation, inadvertent recording other patients or interactions within an office might fall under HIPAA. Other laws could be violated as well including Wiretapping and Eavesdropping laws. However, a complete ban on recording devices could violate Section 7 of National Labor Relations Act which allows the documentation of wage discussions, working conditions and other similar events.

What actions should be taken: Employers not only have the right to ban smart glasses in their offices; they have the legal obligation to do so in order to protect patient privacy. Providers should create a written policy, public signage stating the office policy ban, and incorporate smart glasses use in their employee HIPAA training. Some privacy experts suggest that front desk policy should include questioning patients and visitors about any wearable technology they may have and reminding them any recordings are strictly forbidden.

Legitimate Uses: Offices might use smart glasses technology to record encounters for activities such as training. However, devices should be HIPAA-compliant, patient permission obtained, and every effort be made to minimize exposure of Patient Health Information (PHI). Smart glasses might also be used as an assistive aid for patients and employees with disabilities. Such a use must be counterbalanced with all patient HIPAA and PHI rights and the office responsibility to protect privacy.

Much has been written and will be written about the topic of smart glasses use in the medical setting. Providers would do well to consider their office policies before a HIPAA violation occurs and should promptly deal with any HIPAA that arise.

Happy Coding....

Resources:

What are Smart Glasses: https://www.evenrealities.com/blogs/buyers-guide/what-are-smart-glasses?srsltid=AfmBOopnXoAl0aDwDiZhWne1wp-i7PzVJgZsuBdfDWb_KVpX3ht8XC15

Article written for hospitals: <https://www.lbmc.com/blog/meta-rayban-smart-glasses-hospital-ban/>

Article written for office setting: <https://www.cedrsolutions.com/blog/can-employers-ban-meta-glasses-at-work/>

AOA Resources: [https://www.aoa.org/practice/practice-success-resources/health-insurance-portability-and-accountability-act-\(hipaa\)](https://www.aoa.org/practice/practice-success-resources/health-insurance-portability-and-accountability-act-(hipaa))

AAO Resources: <https://www.aoa.org/eyenet/article/google-glasspossibilities-pitfalls-in-eye-care>

Legal Blog: <https://healthlawblog.dwlaw.com/2026/06/when-the-microphone-lives-on-your-face-smart-glasses-in-the-workplace-and-the-clinic/>