



Northern Illinois University

Office of the President

February 5, 2019

Illinois General Assembly

Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives and Secretary of the Senate

This Annual Report is being made under the Illinois Personal Information Protection Act, Section 25 which requires that any "State agency that has submitted a [breach notification] report . . . shall submit an annual report listing all breaches of security . . . and the corrective measures that have been taken to prevent future breaches."

In 2018, Northern Illinois University experienced **paper-based data breaches of four (4) records and nine (9) records** on two separate occasions. In both cases, notification was sent to the Illinois General Assembly within five business days of the discovery of the data breaches; timely reporting was also made to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and the individuals affected were timely and properly notified.

Breach #1: May 10, 2018

On Thursday, May 10, 2018, three NIU employees received the first printed page of a medical report ("Radiology Consultation") for another one of **four employees**. A fourth mis-printed report had been sent through the campus mail system, but it was retrieved before the fourth NIU employee could view the document. Data exposed in these documents includes the following:

- employee's first and last name
- employee's birth date
- employee's gender
- date of medical evaluation (B-reading)
- patient case number
- brief description of preliminary diagnosis
- last four (4) digits of employee's social security number
- physician's signature and associated date
- employee's clearance to be fitted for a respirator in order to carry out their job duties.

The following corrective measures were implemented:

1. NIU's Environmental Health and Safety Office (EH&S) has reviewed and updated the medical surveillance sections of their safety programs including but not limited to the asbestos and respiratory protection programs.

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2. EH&S contacted PIC and other similar providers to ensure that future medical records are sent directly to the affected employees and that EH&S receive only the clearance documents that state whether the individual NIU employee is medically qualified to don respirators in order to carry out their job duties.
3. EH&S consulted with NIU's Human Resource Services to evaluate disciplinary options for the EH&S employee responsible for this breach.
4. EH&S reviewed existing employee files in their office to determine the extent of any medical records contained therein.
5. EH&S reviewed NIU's Guidelines for Protecting Restricted Data and has implemented procedures to print Restricted Data only when absolutely necessary.

Breach #2: July 12, 2018

On Thursday, July 12, 2018, nine patients of Northern Illinois University's (NIU's) College of Health and Human Sciences (CHHS) Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic experienced a paper-based breach of personal data and personal medical information. Two employees of Northern Illinois ENT Specialists, LTD. erroneously received a shipment of hearing aid accessories and a list of nine patient names from Oticon Inc. The data exposed includes the following:

- patient's first and last name

NIU staff worked with Oticon, Inc.'s in-house counsel to ensure that proper notification was made to individuals and that their staff reviewed their contact addresses and mailing procedures for NIU patients.

NIU is vigorously committed to a secure environment and to protecting the privacy of all students, faculty, staff, and visitors who use NIU's network and resources. While departmental training programs in protecting personally identifiable information have existed at NIU for some time, 2018 was the first year where all faculty and staff were enrolled in an online information safety and data privacy course. Taking approximately 90 minutes to complete, the course and accompanying quizzes specifically referenced the requirements to protect personal health information, whether in print or online.

NIU regrets these inadvertent breaches of employee personal data and will continue to implement processes, procedures, and training regimens to avoid such unfortunate incidents in the future.

Sincerely,



Matthew Streb
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Liaison to the Board of Trustees
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