



### **Record Release**

#### ***Can I refuse to release medical records to a patient who won't pay his bill?***

No. The information in the medical record must be released without regard to the patient's failure to pay a bill in accordance with specific state laws. You should comply with state law and regulations regarding who has the right to request medical records and be aware that some highly privileged records could be commingled with routine office records. Highly privileged records must be handled with special care in all states. Most state laws allow the practice to charge reasonable charges for copying, postage and other direct charges. However, consider the reason for the request, if for instance the patient needs the records to provide information relating to continuing care, consider the good will gesture of releasing the record at no charge. Additionally, if you feel the patient has concerns or lacks understanding of issues involved in his care, ask the patient if he would like to come in to review the record with you. Sometimes time spent in this way can save you and the patient from entering into an adversarial position. Communication and understanding are the keys to better patient care and controlling liability.

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