

for any reason other than providing health services to you. You have a right to access this disclosure log in addition to your right to see your health records.

- If you note inaccurate or incomplete information in your medical records, you have the right to ask the custodian to correct the records under the HIA. If the custodian refuses to make the correction, they must annotate the record to indicate you have requested a correction.
- If you disagree with any decision a custodian makes in response to a request under the HIA (either a request for access or a request for correction) you have the right to approach the Information and Privacy Commissioner to request an independent review of the decision.
- Insurance companies sometimes use your medical records to check your medical history. The Medical Information Bureau (MIB) has a database that contains medical information on over 15 million North Americans. You can obtain a copy of any medical information the MIB has on you by writing to the Medical Information Bureau 330 University Avenue, Suite 501 Toronto, Ontario, M5G 1R7 or by calling them directly at (416) 597-0590.

PROTECTING YOUR PRIVACY AT WORK

- Under Alberta's Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) personal information in the custody or under the control of private sector and non-profit organizations are subject to the Act, while certain non-profit organizations are subject to the Act but only for their commercial transactions. Personal employee information is also covered by PIPA.
- PIPA allows individuals to request access to their own personal information, including their personal employee information, and to request that personal information be corrected if the accuracy of the information is disputed.

- As an employee, you should have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the workplace, particularly in the context of activities that do not involve your work. Personal privacy is a matter of respect for human dignity and respected employees are generally better employees.
- Employers should have written policies on video surveillance, voice mail, e-mail, electronic files and privacy in the workplace, and these policies should be available for employees to review. Ideally, employers will involve employees or their representatives in developing written policies on privacy in the workplace.
- Employees should have access to their personnel files, and the right to ask for corrections to their information. If the corrections are not made, a notation on the file should state the employee has disputed the information.

Additional Privacy Tips

- Be aware of privacy issues. You will see ongoing coverage in the newspapers and on radio and television. Information will also be available at the local library and in books about privacy issues. Tell family, friends and co-workers what you have learned about protecting personal privacy.
- Advocate changes in laws and public policy. Let your government representatives such as MLAs and MPs know your views. Write letters to newspaper editors and spread the word about privacy.
- Advocate from within. In the organizations, clubs and groups where you have an influence, develop a clear and concise privacy policy that meets the needs of all stakeholders.
- Read the fine print. Ask hard questions. Support businesses that respect your privacy, and avoid those that do not.
- Defend and respect the privacy of others.



Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

If you have questions or additional tips on how to protect your privacy, please contact us at:

The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner
410, 9925 – 109 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J8
Telephone: (780) 422-6860
Toll Free: 1-888-878-4044
Facsimile: (780) 422-5682

Email: generalinfo@oipc.ab.ca
Website: www.oipc.ab.ca

Our Office has a resource library which is open to the public.

Alberta's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* enables the protection of your privacy & access with respect to government and public bodies.

Alberta's *Health Information Act* enables the protection of your privacy & access with respect to the publicly funded health system.

Alberta's *Personal Information Protection Act* enables the protection of your privacy & access with respect to private sector organizations.

Learn to protect your personal information.

Protecting Your Privacy



Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

THE FACTS ON PRIVACY

Privacy is an important issue. Albertans need to be aware of privacy issues and to think about them carefully.

As an individual, you have the right to make choices about who can look into your private life or have access to your personal information. Governments, banks and other organizations who need personal information are only the custodians of the information that you entrust to them. They are responsible for its safe-keeping, but they do not own the information — you do! Refusing to give out personal information does not mean you have something to hide. You have the right to ask questions such as, “Why do you need my personal information? And how do you intend to use it?” Be sure you are given good answers, especially when you are asked to supply information you think is private.

WHAT IS PERSONAL INFORMATION?

Any information about you as an individual is referred to as personal information. This may include your name, address, telephone number, social insurance number, credit rating, driver’s licence number, health care insurance number and other identifying or related information. You have options when it comes to deciding what information you will give to companies, marketers, stores and other places of business.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO

Protect Your Privacy

- Be an informed consumer. Challenge the routine expectation that you must give personal information to anyone who asks for it. You do not. Reject formula answers such as, “We’ve always asked for it,” or “It’s company policy.” If the person does not know why the company needs your information or what they plan to do with it, ask to speak to someone who does know. Be sure you are satisfied that the information is being collected for legitimate purposes.

- Give the minimum amount of personal information required. If you are still unsure about the relevance of information requested, ask more questions. For example, you may have to fill out a warranty card to ensure a product warranty is valid for a period of time. You do not have to provide additional information that the seller may want for marketing purposes. Your income, occupation and date of birth are not related to the product warranty.
- Be aware. Special rebate offers, contest forms, free information kits, coupons and some warranty cards may be marketing techniques designed to gather personal consumer information. Do not take advantage of the offer if you do not want your personal information used.
- Challenge any denial of service when you refuse to provide personal information such as your social insurance number (SIN). For example, you do not have to give your social insurance number unless it is required by law or legitimately needed.
- Ask for details on the handling of personal information. The next time someone tells you that information will be kept “strictly confidential,” ask how that will be accomplished. You may also want to ask, “Who will be allowed to see my information? Will anyone outside the organization have access to it? Will my name and address be added to any mailing lists without my consent?”
- Consider asking for a royalty if your information is sold by a company without your permission. Your personal information is valuable. Consumers often pay for a purchase twice: once with cash or credit, and a second time with information that is worth money, since this information is sometimes sold to direct marketing companies. This means you are doing a company a favor by providing personal information.

- Scan all forms you fill out for a check-off box that will allow you to opt out of inclusion on mailing lists and in solicitations. If no box is provided, you may write on the form, stating you do not want your personal information used for any other purpose, including selling, leasing, or renting it to a third party.
- You can phone your insurance company, credit card issuer, magazine publishers, supermarket, telephone company and other organizations you think sold your personal information and ask them to remove your name from lists used for marketing and solicitation.
- If you choose to, you can have your personal information removed from mailing and telephone lists. Write or phone the Canadian Marketing Association
1 Concorde Gate, Suite 607 Don Mills,
Ontario, M3C 3N6 telephone
(416) 391-2362.
Call back in a few months to make sure your name has been added to the “Do Not Mail / Do Not Call” lists.

Telephone Protection

- When you use an 800 or 900 number, your phone number can be recorded and sold to a telemarketer. If you have to use one of these numbers, ask what uses will be made of your information. If the person answering the phone cannot answer your questions or is evasive, think twice about using the service offered. If you have any doubts, hang up.
- Automatic Dialing and Answering Devices (ADAD) calls have been banned in Canada. Complain to your local phone company or to the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) if you receive annoying calls from a computer.
- Request a personal identification number instead of using your Social Insurance Number for phone access to bank, brokerage or mutual fund accounts.
- You have the option of unlisting your name

and address from the telephone book. You may also use call blocking when you do not want to identify yourself over the phone. If you do not want your information shared, phone or write to your local telephone company.

- Be aware that wireless phone conversations can be intercepted using readily available technology. Keep in mind that your cordless or cellular phone calls are not necessarily secure.
- ## Protecting Your Financial Information
- Pay your bills on time. If you miss payments or go into debt, information about you begins to accumulate.
 - If you are concerned about leaving an electronic trail, pay with cash. This will minimize the amount of information circulating about your hobbies, purchases, reading habits and other interests.
 - Find out what is in your credit records, and be sure the information accurately reflects your credit-worthiness. You can go to your credit bureau and ask to see your file. Ask questions about anything you do not understand. Bring any errors to the attention of the staff and ask that the errors be corrected. Go back at another time and make sure the corrections have been made.

PROTECTING YOUR MEDICAL INFORMATION

- Under Alberta’s Health Information Act (HIA) you have the right to request a copy of your health records if they are held by a custodian. Forms used to make this request are available through the Information and Privacy Commissioner’s office or you may simply make the request in writing to the individual or organization that performed the health service for you.
- The HIA also requires custodians of health records to note or “log” each time health information is disclosed without your consent