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Page Title: Cybersecurity for Healthcare Providers in 2024 | [INSERT RELATED SERVICE] | [INSERT FIRM NAME]

Meta Description: [NAME OF FIRM] discusses the evolving landscape of cybersecurity threats confronting healthcare providers in 2024.

Headline: Cybersecurity for Healthcare Providers in 2024

BODY COPY:

Healthcare providers face increasingly sophisticated threats from cybercriminals seeking access to sensitive patient data and other valuable information. Cyberattacks can disrupt services, harm patients' health, damage providers' reputations and potentially lead to legal consequences. Providers need up-to-date plans for mitigating cybersecurity risks and responding to data breaches and other incidents. This article will address significant threats that healthcare providers face in 2024, the possible impact on providers should incidents occur and tips on how to prepare for those risks.

What Cybersecurity Risks Do Healthcare Providers Face in 2024?

Cybersecurity risks for healthcare providers include methods that use deception, malicious code and new twists on old-fashioned hacking.

Ransomware

Healthcare providers are encountering an increasing number of ransomware attacks. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Civil Rights (OCR), the number of ransomware attacks over the past five years has increased by 264 percent.

In a ransomware attack, a hacker uses malicious software, also known as malware, to lock down a healthcare provider's computer system. The provider is unable to access their system without an encryption key. Hackers can place ransomware onto computer systems in a variety of ways, such as through an email attachment.

The hacker offers to give the provider the encryption key in exchange for a ransom payment, often in the form of a cryptocurrency that is difficult to trace. They offer no guarantees, however, that they will actually do so once they receive payment.

Phishing

In a phishing scam, a hacker sends an email that looks like it comes from a legitimate, trusted source. The email might ask the recipient to click on a link or open an attachment that installs malware on their computer. The hacker can use that malware to gain further access to the healthcare provider's system.

Social Engineering

Hackers are using increasingly sophisticated tools to trick healthcare provider employees into giving up sensitive information or allowing access to computer systems. In its simplest form, a social engineering scam is similar to phishing. A hacker poses as someone an employee believes they should trust to get them to hand information over willingly.

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Generative artificial intelligence has taken social engineering to a new level. It can enable hackers to create convincing fake messages, such as a voicemail that uses a manager's voice or an email written in their distinctive style.

Unprotected Technology

With more devices connected to the internet in healthcare provider offices, hackers have more options for brute-force attacks on computer systems. Hackers have been able to go through Wi-Fi-enabled appliances to access servers that store sensitive personal information. On a healthcare provider's computer system, this could include legally-protected patient health information.

OCR reports several troubling hacking-related statistics for healthcare providers:

- The number of cybersecurity incidents involving hacking increased by 256 percent from 2018 to 2023.
- Seventy-nine percent of the large data breach reports received by OCR in 2023 involved hacking.
- These breaches affected 134 million people, which is an increase of 141 percent over the previous year.

What Are the Impacts of Cybersecurity Breaches on Healthcare Providers?

Medical Consequences

Cyberattacks can delay patient care by denying providers access to their computer systems. If doctors, nurses or technicians cannot access a patient's information, they might not be able to treat them. In some cases, this can have fatal consequences.

Financial Consequences

A healthcare provider that suffers a cyberattack will likely face several types of financial consequences:

- Lost revenue from patients who go elsewhere, as well as fewer new patients;
- Costs associated with repairing the damage caused by hackers;
- Legal liability for compromised patient information; and
- Penalties for violations of patient privacy statutes like HIPAA and other laws.

Reputational Consequences

Healthcare providers rely on patient trust and goodwill. A data breach or other cyberattack can significantly damage that trust. Existing patients may leave, and new patients may look to other providers.

Legal Consequences

Healthcare providers must follow rules set forth by OCR and other agencies regarding the security of patient health information. They could face fines and other penalties because of cyber breaches, as well as liability for damages to patients with compromised information.

How Can Healthcare Providers Protect Themselves from Cybersecurity Threats?

The following steps can help healthcare providers mitigate risk and respond to incidents.

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Partition Computer Networks

Computer systems with patient health information should be separate from other systems as much as possible. This minimizes the chances that hackers will find a way in.

Identify Critical Personnel and Limit User Access

Providers should identify who needs access to systems with sensitive data and who does not. The fewer people who can log in to the systems that contain private data, the fewer targets hackers will have for social engineering scams. Those who have access should have training in how to avoid risks.

Conduct Regular Tests of Incident Response Plans

Periodic tests can help identify the need for changes or improvements. They can also help providers determine how to allocate responsibilities when responding to a cyberattack.

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