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# INFORMATION ALERT

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March 13, 2020

## COVID-19 Confidentiality & Public Health

Dear CPA Members:

Many of you have raised questions and concerns about confidentiality in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and possible public health reporting mandates. **Both HIPAA<sup>i</sup> and California law<sup>ii</sup> allow for limited sharing of confidential health information without patient authorization in a public health crisis.** Here are several points to keep in mind if you or a patient who has visited your office has been exposed to COVID-19 and/or is the subject of a public health intervention:

- You are free to disclose *your own* health information to your clients. If you believe you have been exposed to COVID-19, our ethical mandate to avoid harm suggests you should inform your clients so they can take appropriate steps to protect their health and the health of others.
- If a client believes they have been exposed prior to visiting your office, you can inform others who may have been impacted without releasing any identifying information about the exposed client.
- If a public health official requests information about people who have visited your office, **provide the minimum necessary information.** You may be able to give names and contact information only, without specifying whether that person is your client or was visiting your office for another reason.

For additional information about COVID-19, please see yesterday's [Information Alert -- COVID-19 Information & Resources](#) CPA members who have questions can contact me directly at [ewinkelman@cpapsych.org](mailto:ewinkelman@cpapsych.org).

Take care,

Elizabeth

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Note: CPA does not and cannot provide legal advice to our membership. Those seeking legal advice are advised to consult a private attorney.

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/public-health/index.html>

ii Cal. Civil Code § 56.10(c)(18)



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