



DEC 13 2016

William W. Stead, M.D.  
Chair  
National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics  
3311 Toledo Road  
Room 2419  
Hyattsville, MD 20782

Dear Dr. Stead:

Thank you for your letter to Secretary Burwell submitting recommendations from the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS or Committee) regarding the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule's minimum necessary standard. The Secretary asked me to respond to you on her behalf.

I am gratified that the experts who testified at your June 2016 hearing agreed this standard is an integral part of the HIPAA Privacy Rule and as important today as when the rule was drafted. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) greatly appreciates the effort put forth by NCVHS, as these recent recommendations identify important considerations and provide detailed, expert advice on how best to assure that the minimum necessary standard is both protective and practicable. The HHS Office for Civil Rights intends to issue guidance on the minimum necessary standard in accordance with section 13405(b) of the HITECH Act, and it will consider the recommendations of the Committee in its drafting and dissemination.

Thank you again to NCVHS for the dedication and commitment you have shown to ensuring the HIPAA protections of health information privacy remain, as you describe them in your recommendations, the essential foundation for advancement to an information-driven health system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Wakefield".

Mary K. Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N.  
Acting Deputy Secretary