



*Dianna E. Abney, MD, FAAP*  
*Health Officer*

*Linda Fenlon, LCSW-C*  
*Deputy Health Officer*

August, 2023

The Charles County Department of Health is providing this written notice to inform the public of a privacy incident that may have impacted individuals who were previously clients of the WIC and ACCU programs associated with the Charles County Department of Health. To date, we have no evidence that individuals' health information has been misused or shared for carrying out any fraudulent or criminal activity. However, since the security of individuals' confidential information is something we take seriously, we are providing notice of this incident that may have affected you.

**What Happened:**

On Tuesday, August 1, 2023, approximately 50 files that had been set aside to be shredded before disposal, were inadvertently disposed of prior to shredding. A county maintenance worker mistook the files for trash. As a result, the files were placed in a trash bag without shredding and disposed of in the dumpster. The trash was collected and taken to the dump by the trash company on Wednesday, August 2nd. The incident was discovered later that day.

**What Information Was Involved:**

The information involved was names, dates of birth, sex, and race of clients in the WIC and ACCU programs. There was no disclosure of financial information or other identifying information, such as address, Social Security number, Medicaid/Medicare number or credit card numbers.

**What We Are Doing:**

A meeting was held on August 2nd with all staff who were involved in the incident. The individuals were educated on the importance of protecting patient health information (PHI), the proper storage of PHI, and the proper disposal of PHI. In addition, all Charles County Department of Health staff received supplementary training on the importance of securing patient health information, including documents slated for shredding. Finally, county government maintenance staff were educated about the importance of HIPAA protections and disposing of PHI in the appropriate manner.

**What You Can Do:**

While we are confident that this information has not been misused or shared for carrying out any fraudulent or criminal activity, you may want to consider taking steps to protect yourself from potential harm resulting from this breach, such as continuing to monitor your credit report.



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If you have any questions or would like additional information regarding this incident, you may contact the Charles County Department of Health by phone at 301-609-6900 or toll-free at 1-877-631-6183. If you wish to write to us, you may do so at: 4545 Crain Highway, White Plains, MD 20695. Office hours for the Charles County Department of Health are Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM.

We offer our sincerest apology that this unfortunate incident occurred. We assure you that safeguarding your information is of the utmost importance to us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Abney MD".

Dianna E. Abney, MD, FAAP  
Health Officer, Charles County