HIPAA Software for Distance Counseling

Question:

Hello WCET members:

I need some help with the following situation. My university has a counseling program that wants to move online and they sent me this question. I'm wondering if anyone has any suggestions on software?

I need to utilize HIPAA compliant software for distance supervision. I need students to have the ability to record audio and video in a clinical setting and save the recordings on a secured HIPAA compliant server, where I can then listen and/or watch the recordings, provide feedback, then have the student view the feedback.

– Justin R Louder, Texas Tech University

Answers:

Zoom is a HIPAA compliant web conferencing software, and we use it for tele counseling services for the distance learners. There is a lesser version I understand, so you have to get some verification of which version you are getting.

– Reed Scull, University of Wyoming.

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We have a psychology department that uses Zoom web conferencing for a similar kind of use. Our Online department has a regular version of Zoom that most departments on campus use and love, but the psychology department purchased the HIPAA version. Here is the website:

https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/207652183-HIPAA-Business-Associate-Agreement-BAA-

– Janelle Knaggs, Oregon Institute of Technology

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Since it isn't explicitly clear what "HIPAA compliant" means in an operational sense, I will assume that what is needed here is a media server system with the kinds of controls that limit access to media to only those who are authorized to view it.

I'll start from the end and work backwards:

GSC uses the Kaltura video streaming system which is an enterprise scale application on its own proprietary servers serving global client and audience needs. It is integrated into our LMS, but only in the sense that it is part of the user interface. The system itself is separate from our LMS.

Administrators can setup user accounts which limit their access to only those areas where they have been granted access, and media files can be protected within Web pages which can only be accessed through integrated institution-based authentication systems (think single sign-on). For the record, the actual product you would be interested in, as described here, would be MediaSpace.

So that secures both the system and who has access to the media on the backend.

The other part of the process here is not exactly clear. If the person doing the field-based recording is using a portable device and then copies the file onto a desktop/laptop in order to upload it to Kaltura, then there are possibilities for that media to discovered in a way that was not intended. No system can account for that since there are human factors involved (much as there are human factors in keeping personal medical information private as well).

However, the alternative would be to designate a specific location/room where there is a Kaltura-based lecture capture system so that the recording system can send the media directly to the secure location within Kaltura with minimal human intervention and "insecure" devices. This, of course, limits what you can do in field based research, but it gives you a sense of what is possible.

Maybe there is a way to setup a field-based recording system that ties directly into the secure lecture capture system? You'd have check the tech specs to pull that off (such as Internet upload speed) and work with a consultant.

> – Steve Covello, Granite State College (USNH)

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For that sort of thing, we have several departments that use, and are enthusiastic, about GoReact, which complies with HIPAA: https://community.goreact.com/hc/en-us/articles/115000273226-Compliance-privacy-security-and-accessibility

> – Neal Legler, Utah State University

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After a pretty exhaustive review, with counselors in the forefront of the decision, we chose Cranium Cafe

(now called ConnexEd) it is FERPA compliant and integrates with SARS. http://www.conexed.com/

– Patricia James, California Community Colleges' Online Education Initiative

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I've been wading through HIPAA compliance on a number of projects, and it's not limited to technology controls. Many of these systems may have technical safeguards to make it possible for them to be used in HIPAA Compliant solution, and the companies have the required Business Associate Agreements (BAAs), which is great. However, the technical controls are only one component in the total security plan which has to also include people and process, and these are generally defined at the level of your institution. It is best to get your HIPAA Compliance Officer and Information Security Officer involved in designing the overall solution so that you are including the other required components to the security plan.

– Elisha Allen, The University of New Mexico

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