

Definitions of Key Terms

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) as defined by OMB Memorandum M-07-16 is any information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, either alone or when combined with other personal information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual.

There are two types of PII based on the "risk of harm" that could result from the release of the PII.

- ▮ Protected PII – as defined by the U.S. Department of Labor is any information that if disclosed could result in harm to the individual whose name or identify is linked to that information. Examples include, but are not limited to, social security numbers, credit card numbers, bank account numbers, personal telephone numbers, ages, birthdates, marital status, spouse names, educational history, biometrics identifiers, medical history, financial information, and computer passwords.
- ▮ Non-Sensitive PII – As defined by the Department of Labor, is information that if disclosed, by itself, could not reasonably be expected to result in personal harm as it is not linked or closely associated with any protected or unprotected PII. Examples include first and last names, e-mail addresses, business addresses, business telephone numbers, general education credentials, gender, or race.

A combination of non-sensitive PII could potentially be categorized as protected PII. As example, a name and business e-mail address will not result in a high degree of harm to an individual. A name linked to a social security number and date of birth could result in identity theft.

Security Breach is used to include the loss of control, compromise, unauthorized disclosure, unauthorized acquisition, unauthorized access, or any similar term referring to situations where persons other than authorized users and for an other than authorized purpose have access or potential access to personally identifiable information, whether physical or electronic.

Sensitive Information is any unclassified information whose loss, misuse or unauthorized access to or modification of could adversely affect the interest of the conduct of Federal programs, or the privacy to which individuals are entitled under the Privacy Act.