

HIPAA Considerations When Choosing a Shared Office Space

By OSI Offices | June 24, 2026 | 6 min read

When mental health professionals begin exploring shared office arrangements, one question surfaces almost immediately: *Is this space actually HIPAA compliant?* It's the right question to ask — and the answer is more nuanced than most therapists expect. **HIPAA shared office space** compliance isn't simply a checkbox you verify once; it involves evaluating physical privacy, staff protocols, and ongoing documentation practices. Making the wrong choice can put your clients and your license at risk.

This guide walks through exactly what HIPAA requires of your physical office environment, the questions to ask any provider before signing, and what a genuinely therapy-ready shared office looks like in Washington DC.

What HIPAA Actually Requires of Your Physical Space

HIPAA's Privacy Rule and Security Rule don't specify a particular office configuration — but they do establish clear standards around protecting **Protected Health Information (PHI)**, which includes anything a client shares during a therapy session.

Under the "minimum necessary" principle and HIPAA's physical safeguards requirements, your practice space must:

- Prevent unauthorized individuals from overhearing sessions
- Ensure client PHI isn't visible or audible to other building occupants
- Restrict access to areas where PHI may be discussed or stored
- Protect records — whether digital or paper — from unauthorized access

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR), which enforces HIPAA, has investigated cases where therapists were found non-compliant due to inadequate sound privacy — even in otherwise professional office buildings. The operative standard is whether a **reasonable effort** was made to safeguard client privacy. That's both a practical and a documentation question.

The Sound Privacy Problem in Shared Offices

Sound privacy is the most commonly overlooked aspect of HIPAA compliance in shared office environments. In a typical coworking space or open-plan building, voices carry. A client discussing trauma,

psychiatric history, or relationship struggles in a thin-walled room creates real and measurable exposure.

When evaluating any shared office provider, look for:

- Fully enclosed, private rooms — not open desks, partitioned booths, or "privacy pods"
- Solid-core doors that close and latch securely
- Adequate wall insulation or white noise systems in hallways and waiting areas
- A waiting area that is separate from other tenants' work areas

Not all "private offices" provide equivalent sound protection. Ask directly: "*Can voices be clearly heard through the walls or under the door?*" A reputable provider will answer honestly — and ideally walk you through the room in person before you commit.

Protecting Client PHI Beyond Sound

Sound privacy is critical, but a comprehensive approach to **HIPAA compliant office rental** also covers how PHI is handled in other operational dimensions.

Reception and Client Check-In

If a front desk team checks in your clients, they should never announce a client's name or reason for visit aloud in a shared reception area. At OSI Offices, the reception staff is trained in professional discretion — clients are greeted and directed to the waiting area without unnecessary disclosure. After more than four decades of serving mental health professionals, that kind of sensitivity is built into the culture of the building, not just the policy manual.

Mail Handling and Client Correspondence

If you use your office address for any client-related correspondence — insurance EOBs, appointment letters, or records requests — your mail handling provider must be trustworthy and operationally sound. OSI Offices uses AI-powered mail scanning with secure digital delivery through a private client portal, minimizing the number of people who physically handle your correspondence. (For full details on how mail services work, see osioffices.com/virtual-mail-service.)

Shared Technology and Printing

Avoid printing PHI on shared printers accessible to other tenants. Log out of all EHR systems, client portals, and scheduling tools before leaving an office session. Look for providers that offer private or password-protected printer access, and confirm that shared workstations are not used for clinical documentation.

The Business Associate Agreement Question

One area where therapists sometimes overlook HIPAA requirements: **Business Associate Agreements (BAAs)**.

Under HIPAA, if a vendor or service provider may encounter PHI in the course of providing services to your practice, they may qualify as a Business Associate — and you may be required to have a BAA in place with them. Whether your office space provider qualifies depends on the specific nature of the services and how they intersect with your PHI. This determination is best made with your practice's HIPAA compliance officer or a healthcare attorney.

If your provider handles mail that may contain PHI, manages client-facing reception, or stores any documents on your behalf, it is reasonable to ask: *Do you have a BAA process? What HIPAA training does your staff receive?* A provider experienced with clinical practitioners will have a clear answer.

Questions to Ask Any Shared Office Provider

Before signing any agreement, work through these questions:

1. **Are rooms fully enclosed with solid doors that close securely?**
2. **What soundproofing measures are in place? Is white noise used in hallways?**
3. **How are clients greeted at reception? What privacy protocols exist?**
4. **How is mail handled? Can client-related correspondence be secured?**
5. **Can I reserve the same room consistently?** Continuity matters for the therapeutic relationship — and for building client comfort in a space.
6. **Are other mental health professionals in the building?** A community of MHPs signals that the building is genuinely set up for clinical practice — not just tolerating it.
7. **Do you have a BAA process for healthcare providers?**

A provider experienced with mental health professionals will answer these questions without hesitation — and often without being asked.

Why a Therapy-Oriented Building Changes Everything

There is a meaningful difference between a general coworking facility and an office provider that has deliberately built its culture and operations around clinical practice. The physical setup matters. The staff training matters. And the community of fellow practitioners matters more than most therapists expect when they're first evaluating options.

OSI Offices, located at 1629 K Street NW in Washington DC, has served over 150 therapists, psychologists, and counselors for decades. That community isn't incidental — it shapes how the building operates. Clients waiting for therapy sessions at OSI encounter a calm, professionally designed space with nature videos in the lounge. They are not sharing a waiting area with construction firm staff or a startup team on a conference call. The environment communicates *confidentiality* before a session even begins.

That kind of intentional design is difficult to retrofit into a generic coworking space — and it directly supports your HIPAA compliance posture as a **therapist office privacy** matter.

"As a clinical psychologist, I can say that OSI provides exactly what I need. They provide great locations, professional office suites, flexibility, dependability, good friendly professional service with individualized attention, and the best rates in Washington, DC. This is why I have been with them for over 20 years."

— Marcus M. Mottley, Ph.D., Executive Coach & Organizational Consultant

That kind of long-term trust — 20 years with a single provider — reflects something beyond convenience. It reflects confidence that the environment reliably meets the standards a clinical practice demands.

HIPAA Compliance Is Ongoing, Not a One-Time Check

One important point that often gets overlooked: HIPAA compliance in your physical space isn't a one-time evaluation at setup. It requires ongoing attention — especially if you use different rooms, rotate between locations, or add new services over time.

Best practices for maintaining compliance in a shared office environment include:

- Documenting that you evaluated your office space for sound privacy and physical safeguards
- Noting any BAAs in place with service providers in your compliance records
- Including your office location in your HIPAA risk assessment (required annually for most practices)
- Informing clients during intake that sessions are conducted in a private, professionally managed office
- Requesting consistent room assignments to establish a predictable and verifiable clinical environment

The documentation aspect matters as much as the physical reality. In the event of a complaint or OCR audit, your ability to demonstrate

that you made a reasonable, documented effort to protect PHI is your primary defense — and your primary protection for your clients.

What OSI Offices Provides for HIPAA-Conscious Practitioners

At 1629 K Street NW, one block from the White House and steps from Farragut North Metro (Red Line), OSI Offices provides therapy rooms designed for **confidential therapy space** that supports clinical practice:

- Fully enclosed, private rooms with professional-grade sound privacy
- Reception staff trained in discretion — your clients are greeted and guided, not announced
- AI-powered secure mail handling with digital delivery through a private portal
- Consistent, bookable room reservations to support therapeutic continuity
- A community of 150+ mental health professionals whose presence affirms the clinical nature of the environment
- Extended hours — open until 9PM weekdays, 6PM Saturdays — to accommodate evening and weekend caseloads

Plans for mental health professionals start from \$35/month, with on-demand therapy rooms available at \$14/hour. There are no security deposits, no setup fees, and no long-term lease commitments — ever. (Pricing is subject to change; see osioffices.com/pricing for current rates.)

Whether you are launching a private practice, maintaining a part-time caseload, or looking for a more professionally sound alternative to

your current arrangement, [OSI Offices' mental health professional plans](#) are designed around the specific compliance and clinical needs of practitioners in Washington DC.

HIPAA Compliance Checklist for Shared Office Evaluation

- Fully private, enclosed rooms with solid-core doors that close securely
- Sound privacy protections — wall insulation, white noise, door seals
- Discreet client reception and check-in protocols
- Secure mail handling for any PHI-related correspondence
- No shared printers accessible to other tenants
- Staff familiarity with therapy practice norms and privacy expectations
- Consistent room access (same room, standing reservation)
- BAA available if provider handles PHI on your behalf
- Documentation of your evaluation in your annual HIPAA risk assessment

Your clients trust you with some of the most sensitive information in their lives. The office you choose should be fully worthy of that trust — not just adequate, but designed for it.

Find Your HIPAA-Ready Therapy Space in DC

Join 150+ mental health professionals at OSI Offices — private rooms, professional staff, and 45 years of serving DC's clinical community. No deposits. No hidden fees. No long-term contracts.

[Explore Therapy Office Plans](#)

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