

Virtru Alerts Columbia County Employees When to Encrypt Sensitive Data for CJIS and HIPAA Compliance

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Chief Technology Officer,
Columbia County, NY

Located in the state of New York, **Columbia County's government officials and staff** send a lot of emails. Columbia County has 23 different departments, from healthcare to law enforcement to the courts, and it's more than 450 staff members also manage senior living and probation facilities and regularly contact the sheriff's and treasurer's offices. Do the math, and you've got a massive amount of sensitive data being exchanged online each day. After realizing they needed a data protection solution for compliance and privacy reasons, **Richard Juliano, Columbia County's Chief Technology Officer**, turned to Virtru.

Richard was specifically worried about complying with the Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), regulations that mandate the protection of criminal justice and patient health information, respectively. "HIPAA and CJIS are serious stuff, bringing the risk of hefty fines," says Richard. "Now that the whole county uses Virtru, we're confident we have the solution."

Encryption and Control—For Everyone

Regulations like CJIS and HIPAA require Columbia County to have an encryption service in place for their electronic communications, and they receive annual audits from the comptroller to ensure they are following these protocols. Before Virtru, the onus was on employees to try their best to stay HIPAA-compliant when transmitting protected health information (PHI), having to rely on non-specific identifiers instead of client names. With no formal solution in place, human errors inevitably occurred.

Virtru now gives Columbia County the power to control email encryption across the board, leaving nothing to chance. The easy-to-use software examines subject lines, email content, attachments, and other criteria to scout out sensitive info, including credit card and social security numbers, and other keywords flagged by administrators. When Virtru detects these patterns, emails can be set to automatically encrypt, or a warning message can pop up indicating that sensitive data was detected and the user may want to encrypt the message.

As Juliano explains, “Virtru isn’t complacent—it actually educates our staff on HIPAA and CJIS compliance requirements as they do their normal work. We use the administrator tools and warning messages to highlight keywords that are included in emails, prompting senders to simply click for encryption.”

Virtru can also automatically encrypt all messages sent to specific domains or email addresses, meaning that any email going to an employee at the sheriff’s office, for example, will always be protected. With control like this, compliance takes care of itself, for both end users and admins.

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The Other Contenders

“Virtru was not only the best product, but had the best price. Simple.” Before partnering with Virtru, Columbia County relied on SOPHOS for online security, but the software didn’t work well enough with their cloud-based Google Apps for Government platform. As Juliano explains, “SOPHOS functioned on our local server. It didn’t encrypt from the client-side and protect emails being sent outside the organization or via a cloud service like Gmail.”

Juliano researched other encryption services and discovered that Virtru’s client-side functionality offered the deepest and most flexible security coverage, while providing much more value than tools like ZixMail, GAME, and SOPHOS.

Virtru was also the easiest encryption service to use: “You don’t have to log in multiple times, and there are no long passwords to remember, so people can use it without too much fuss,” he says. “Virtru is incredibly easy to implement county-wide. That, plus its other functionality, makes it seamless for us to train our users.”

Columbia County chose Virtru for the following attributes:

- **HIPAA and CJIS compliance:** Sensitive data is encrypted from the client-side, so only senders and recipients ever have access, ensuring compliance with regulations to avoid hefty fines and penalties.
- **Robust Data Loss Prevention (DLP):** Administrators can easily set rules to detect and encrypt end-users’ sensitive information, including auto-encrypting messages sent to certain domains, which greatly reduces the risk of human error.
- **Ease of Use:** Virtru integrates directly into existing email clients, such as Gmail and Outlook. For recipients, Virtru leverages existing account credentials so that recipients never have to create new usernames and passwords to access protected email.

Install in Minutes

Since Virtru works directly within existing email systems, there's nothing new for users to learn.

"The installation process was a breeze because Virtru integrates seamlessly into Outlook, Google Apps, and Gmail, which is what all our government departments use," Juliano says. "Even better, Virtru also enables secure replies for our recipients. Clients can respond to us with a safe, encrypted email, without even having to download the software themselves."

"We couldn't ask for better support," Juliano says. "We're confident that the Virtru team is always eager to help us when needed and is constantly developing new features and products."

Easy-to-use, ironclad email encryption plus excellent customer service is a winning security equation for the government of Columbia County where employees take comfort knowing Virtru is always safely by their sides—serving as a personal compliance companion and confidant. ●

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For more information on how Virtru can encrypt your organization's data for CJIS and HIPAA compliance, please get in touch with us. virtru.com/contact-us.



At Virtru, we empower organizations to unlock the power of data while maintaining control, everywhere it's stored and shared. Our portfolio of solutions and tools—built on our open data protection platform—governs data throughout its lifecycle. More than 20,000 organizations trust Virtru for data security and privacy protection.