

CHOOSING YOUR IDEAL MEDICAL RECORDS RETRIEVAL SERVICE PROVIDER

A GUIDE TO INDUSTRY BEST PRACTICES AND TOP QUALITIES
FOUND IN TODAY'S LEADING RECORDS RETRIEVAL COMPANIES



CREATED BY: RECORD RETRIEVAL SOLUTIONS

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TODAY'S MEDICAL RECORDS RETRIEVAL SERVICES

Today's medical records retrieval services (MRRS) is a rules-compliant outsourced solution benefiting from modern web-based technology.

Differences in the strategies and tools companies use to provide records retrieval services can greatly affect the security, cost, thoroughness, accurateness, and admissibility of the records you receive. These are critical factors in cases where medical records form the foundation for proving plaintiff's damages.

The more experience a provider has, the more likely you'll receive records you can rely on and services you trust. Some companies that offer records retrieval service simply tack it on at the end of a long list of other administrative offerings.

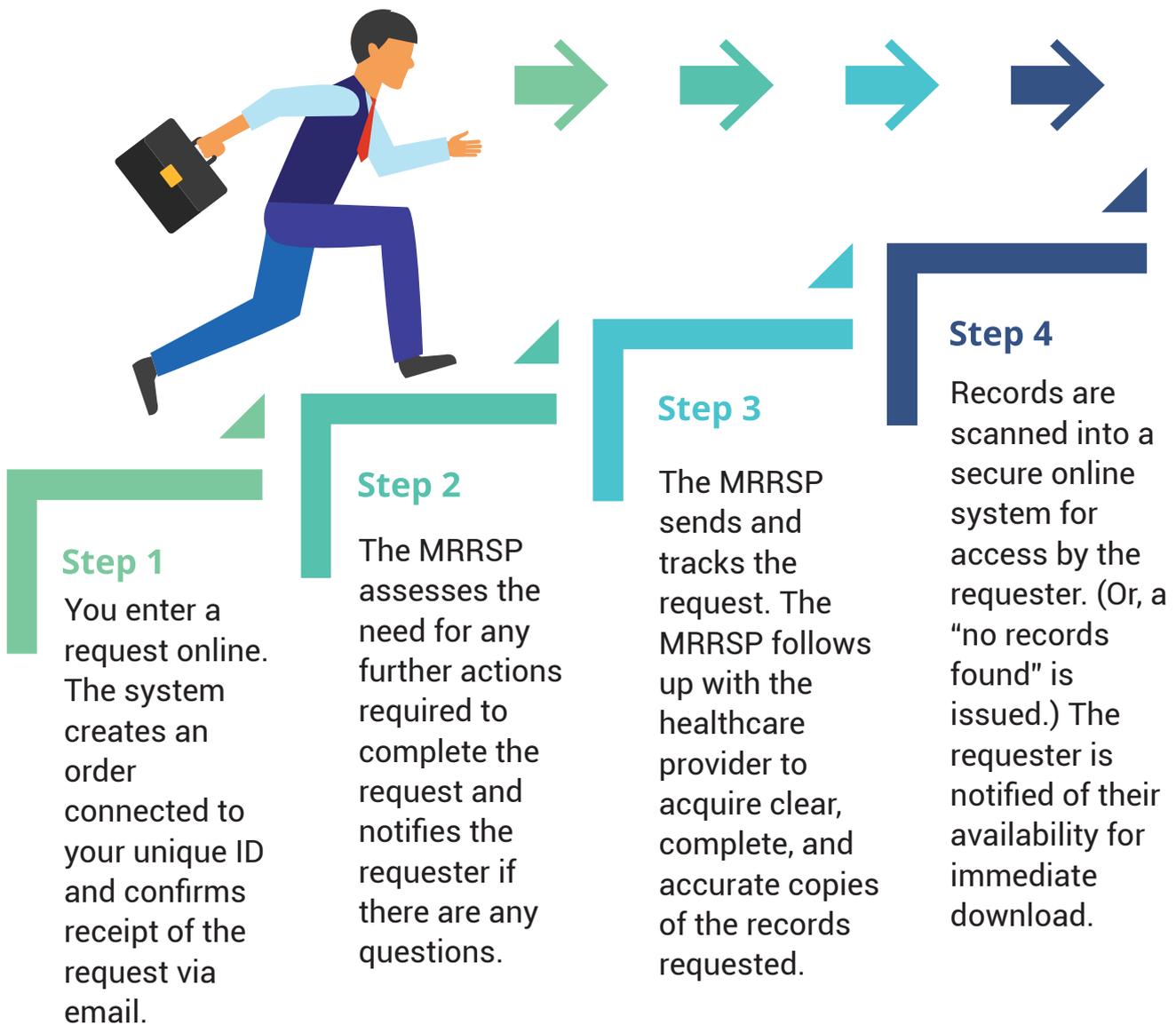
They don't have any real expertise or experience in navigating the medical records retrieval terrain. They won't know the ins and outs of providing the highest quality services like a company headed by a professional with decades of experience.

Several factors are important to consider when looking for a records retrieval partner. This guide discusses technological and personal service features your ideal MRR service provider (MRRSP) should offer. Understanding the best practices followed by the top-notch providers in the industry better prepares you for what to expect from this important business partner and how they can best serve you.



STEPS IN THE MRR SERVICE PROCESS

Obtaining medical records through a service provider should be EASY. Though many additional features and services should be available, basic steps of the MRR process are straightforward and include:



Today, nearly all medical records are produced digitally. Records are available in PDF or TIFF file formats and are searchable by most document management systems—including on-premise, cloud-based, web-based, and hybrid systems. Records are usually made available for viewing and download from any location on any device that supports a secure microbrowser.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FINDING THE RIGHT PROVIDER

Throughout the MRR process, the service provider you partner with must be trusted to:

1. Handle highly confidential personal health information using appropriate security measures.
2. Work with you and other staff to reduce and ease workloads, not suck up time or cause more problems.
3. Save money in unexpected ways such as knowing when you're overcharged on fees.

You should feel as if your MRRSP is a reliable team member. The right partner will improve your firm's productivity. With an experienced MRRSP working for you, records can be indexed, sorted, organized, and available for review much more quickly. And billing for MRR expenses is easier with all costs streamlined by a single source.

Generally, partnering with a MRRSP frees up a great deal of time staff would've otherwise spent chasing records. Often, the most immediate result is an overall sense of relief as happier staff members feel happier and more fulfilled working on more important (and billable) tasks.



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT MRR



When evaluating MRR service providers, you'll inevitably ask the following important questions:

Are the processes they use HIPAA-compliant?

Do their processes meet all the same professional standards and ethical requirements for data privacy protection and security that lawyers are held to?

What will the service cost? How does pricing work?

Will it take longer to receive records if I use a MRR service provider?

What is their experience level? Is MRR their expertise? Has the person running the show ever actually handled medical records?

Your ideal MRRSP should be happy to answer these questions. They should be able to easily demonstrate the value they bring to your firm. And of course, you should not have to work too hard to get the information you need to evaluate them. If the answers to the questions above aren't readily available on the company's website, it could be a red flag.

6 BEST PRACTICES IN MEDICAL RECORDS RETRIEVAL

01

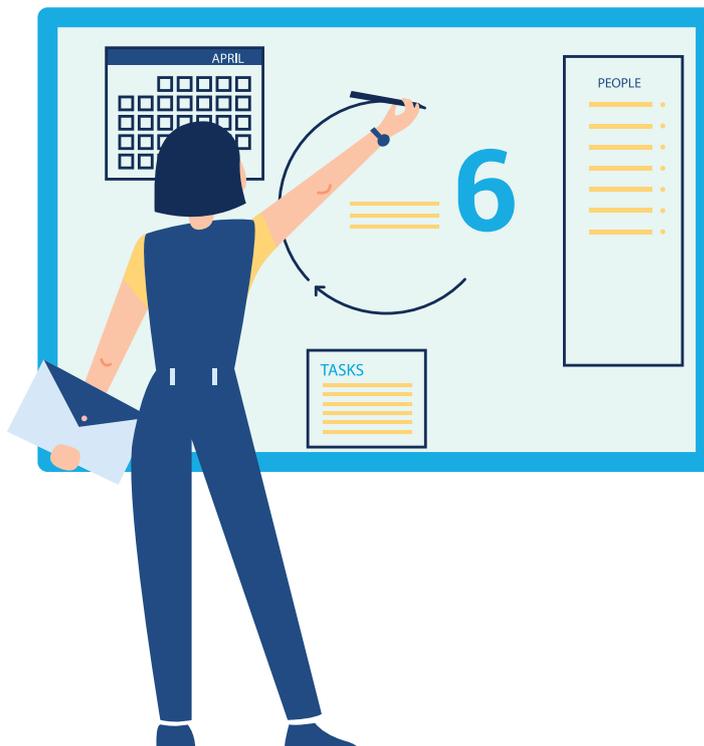
An ideal MRRSP is able to demonstrate secure access to its website.

Online security is always your first concern. What security practices are in place to prevent hackers from accessing your clients' data at one of its most dangerous access points - transfer to and from the MRRSP's website? See the the "Safeguarding Privacy" section for more details on this all-important issue.

02

An ideal MRRSP ensures private data remains protected using appropriate security measures.

What security measures prevent the release of your clients' protected health information while the MRRSP communicates with healthcare facilities? And what do they do to ensure their servers and offsite storage remain secure? See the "Safeguarding Privacy" section for further discussion.



6 BEST PRACTICES IN MEDICAL RECORDS RETRIEVAL



03

An ideal MRRSP explains how their internal processes work and provides anticipated turnaround times on requests.

Mystery is cool in novels, movies, and occasionally tall, dark strangers. Never in service providers, especially those handling your clients' private health information. An experienced provider has established the fastest, most reliable methods and considers it part of their service to let you know what to expect. Also important: MRR service providers should have a policy that no personally identifiable health information can ever be used for non-business related activities such as marketing and sales lead generation.

04

An ideal MRRSP can demonstrate their level of experience in expediting record requests by sharing a list of references and client testimonials when asked.

We're all for the new guy in, say, music or athletics. But, experience matters when your MRRSP's ability to obtain and produce thorough, accurate records quickly and efficiently directly affects your ability to settle more cases faster. Client testimonials are proof that a MRRSP can back up its promises.

6 BEST PRACTICES IN MEDICAL RECORDS RETRIEVAL

05

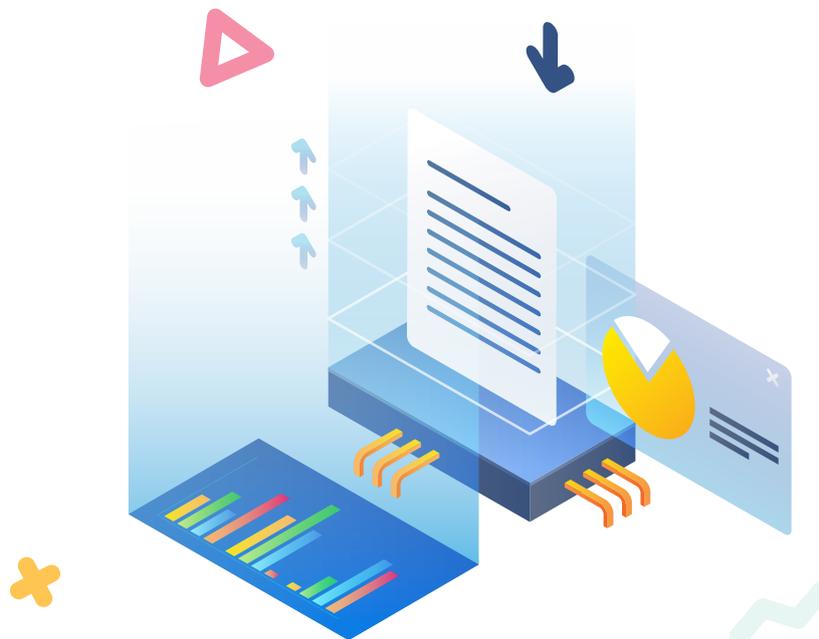
An ideal MRRSP reviews the processes by which you are notified of updates, records availability, and notices of “no records found.”

During the selection process, you should ascertain the provider’s practices regarding communications. It is only fair that you know what to expect and when to expect it before you invest your time and money in a new partnership meant to last years, even decades. An ideal provider should also have a process in place for informing you when you’re being overcharged on provider fees.

06

An ideal MRRSP provides a full pricing schedule, preferably in a format that permits you to do an apples-to-apples comparison to other MRRSPs’ fees.

The provider should have nothing to hide. You should be able to tell you’re getting a good deal. Pricing schedules should include the costs and details of any “extra” services so you understand what those are long before they appear on an invoice. You should also understand their policies for paying and recouping provider fees.



SAFEGUARDING PRIVACY

No matter how beneficial a service is, it must first comply with all federal and state HIPAA guidelines, the HITECH Act, and all other professional standards or ethical rules for maintaining client confidentiality. A qualified MRRSP will comply with the HIPAA Privacy & Security Rule by taking measures to:



1. Ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of all personal health information and records.
2. Identify and protect against reasonably anticipated threats to the security or integrity of the information.
3. Protect against reasonably anticipated, impermissible uses or disclosures; and
4. Ensure compliance by their employees.

This includes implementing multiple security layers to protect your data including:

1. Using only U.S.-based servers
2. 128-bit SSL site encryption
3. 256-bit AES data encryption
4. Requiring individual user login and passwords
5. Using Java-based technology to avoid phishing
6. A constant vigilance on the latest security threats and technologies available.

TIME & MONEY SAVING FEATURE: A THOROUGH DATABASE

It can take hours, even days, to hunt down the correct recipient for medical records and billing requests.

Hard copies of records may be located in a different building or city than the healthcare provider. Hospital billing records are often stored off site, sometimes in another state. With the advent of electronic records, more healthcare providers are centralizing records off site under an umbrella company for their medical group/hospital.

You waste valuable time trying to figure out where to send requests and re-sending requests that went to wrong locations.

A database of updated healthcare provider information showing who to contact and where to send records requests saves time and money and ensures complete results.



TIP

Look for a MRRSP who has developed a thorough healthcare provider database and has the resources to maintain it.



TIME & MONEY SAVING FEATURE: SPEED IS CRITICAL



Whether needed to respond to discovery, make or oppose a motion for summary judgment, get an expert up to speed, or settle a case, obtaining medical records timely is critical for moving cases forward.

Chief among the benefit of using a qualified MRRSP is that they have more experience working with medical providers and can usually obtain records more quickly than a law firm's in-house staff.

After all, a law firm staff member may encounter (or, in truth, may feel like they're stuck with) the occasional medical record search. But an MRRSP is a specialist in collecting and delivering records. Their team has the process down to an efficient set of specific steps and can respond to your needs quickly via an online interface.



TIP

Look for a reliable MRRSP that recognizes your need to receive records quickly and provides a fast turnaround through an easily accessed online portal.

TIME & MONEY SAVING FEATURE: RELATIONSHIPS WITH HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Hospitals, physicians' offices, and other healthcare providers occasionally treat requests from attorneys for medical records as a major inconvenience. They may not respond as quickly or completely as you would like or need.

An ideal MRRSP recognizes the importance of developing long-term relationships with healthcare providers and their staff. Knowing the right people in the right places and engaging in friendly relationships encourages prompt attention and efficient delivery.



 **TIP**

Look for a MRRSP who employs people you enjoy speaking with. If they're rude or short with you, they aren't charming the healthcare providers who need to respond to them on your behalf.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY



Waiting for information to check off that last box on your to-do list is maddening. MRRSPs should be sensitive to your need to remain informed on the latest development. Yet, they should meet that need discreetly so as not to cause unnecessary drama.

The MRRSP should be proactive in communicating and:

- Immediately send alerts if additional information is required,
- Provide fast replies via email when appropriate, and
- Deliver the link to download and/or view completed requests the very moment records become available.



TIP

Look for a MRRSP that provides ongoing and timely updates regarding the status of your requests. Each record should be tracked in real-time with detailed notes from the MRR agents available at any time through an online dashboard.

MEDICAL RECORDS RETRIEVAL COSTS

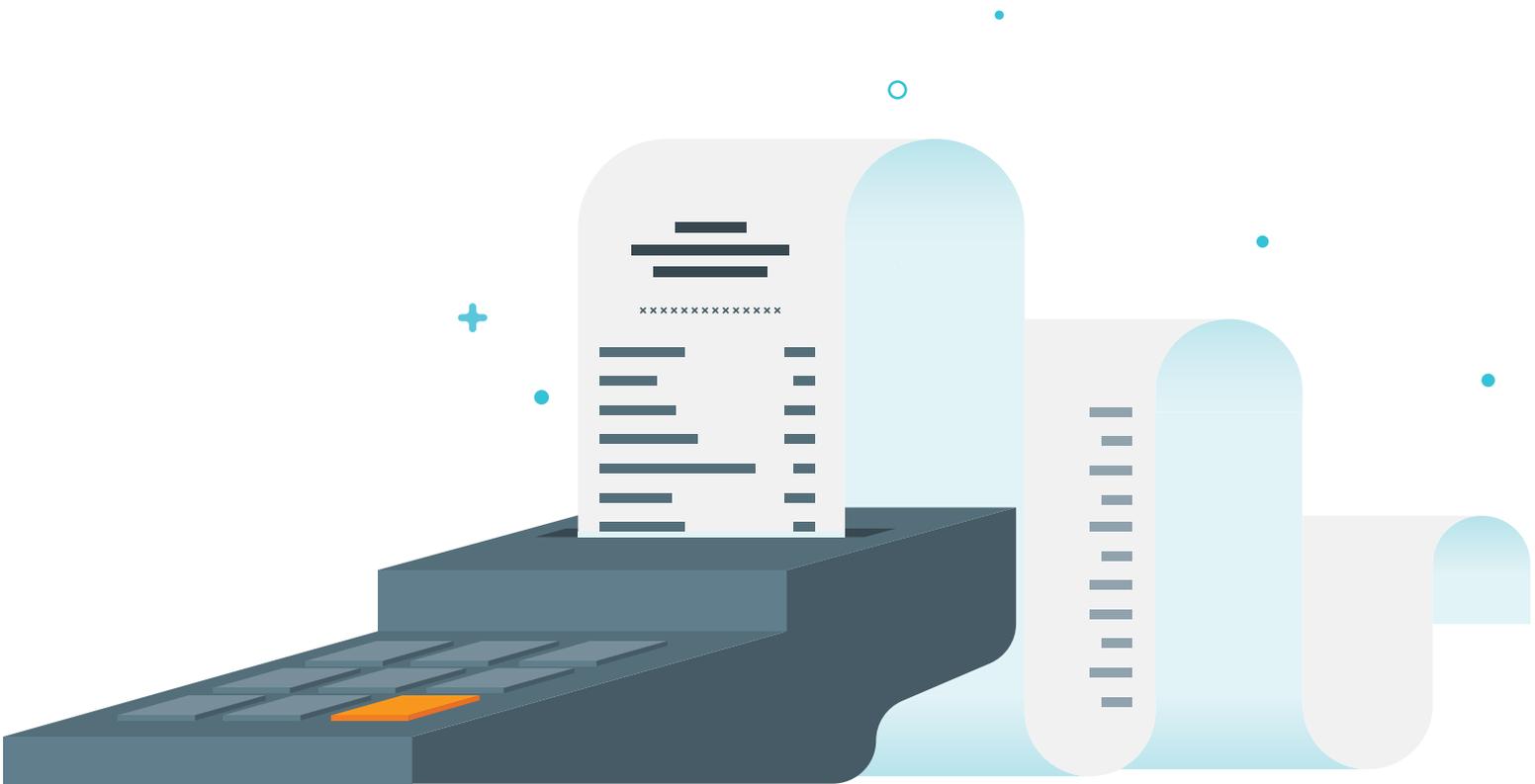
Of course, MRRSPs aren't volunteer organizations. Even an ideal MRRSP will charge you for their services.

However, because your firm's resources are freed up to work on activities that generate revenue, the cost of using a MRRSP is offset at least in part and, more typically, in full. Depending on your fee arrangement with your client, the invoices from the MRRSP may be directly billable to the client or at least accounted for as a recoverable cost.



TIP

Your MRRSP shouldn't charge a monthly fee just for maintaining an account. You should incur a fee only on a usage basis, which could then be allocable to specific cases.



ESTABLISHING A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

Certain steps are taken at the beginning of a successful relationship with a provider. These are commonplace requests for information to establish a secure, active account:



You identify which firm personnel are authorized to access the secure system.

A unique user ID is created for the firm with a strong password required for future access.

In some cases, billing information is provided when the firm's account is established.

Each authorized person completes a new user profile and sign-on request.

While the use of the MRRSP's website should be easy for most users with minimal training, additional site support should be available from the MRRSP's personnel via phone or email.



TIP

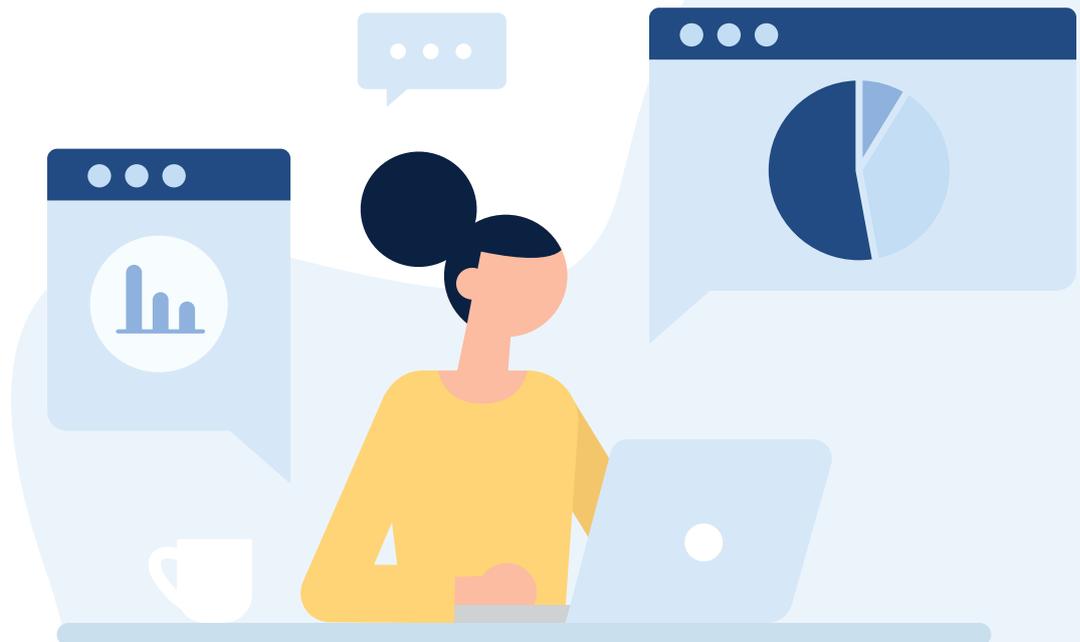
Look for a provider who makes these steps seamless for you and your firm. If these basic steps are unduly cumbersome, it's unlikely that the rest of your transactions with the provider will go smoothly.

A ONE-CLICK QUANTUM LEAP FORWARD

Qualified, experienced MRRSPs offer cost-effective, robust platforms for processing, monitoring, and tracking medical records requests. Order statuses are always readily available. Records management and processing procedures are HIPAA-compliant and secure—which in-house processes may not be.

Benefits are significant and immediate. Partnering with a MRRSP requires no capital expenditures, yet provides your firm with easy access to digitally maintained medical records. Firm resources can be repurposed from tracking record requests to more meaningful, fee-generating activities. Client satisfaction often improves as matters are processed more efficiently. Firm business may increase.

Partnering with your ideal MRRSP is literally a one-click quantum leap from manual, resource-heavy processes to a modern, secure, digital medical records management practice for your firm.



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