

## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES FOR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

“THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.”

Our Agency is required by law to maintain the privacy of protected health information and to provide you adequate notice of your rights and our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to the uses and disclosures of protected health information. [45 CFR § 165.520] We will use or disclose protected health information in a manner that is consistent with this notice.

The agency maintains a record (paper/electronic file) of the information we receive and collect about you and of the care we provide to you. This record includes physician's orders, assessments, medication lists, clinical progress notes and billing information.

As required by law, the agency maintains policies and procedures about our work practices, including how we provide and coordinate care provided to our patients. These policies and procedures include how we create; maintain; and protect medical records; access to medical information about our patients; how we maintain the confidentiality of all information related to our patients; security of the building and electronic files; and how we educate staff on privacy of patient information.

As our patient, information about you must be used and disclosed to other parties for purposes of treatment, payment, and health care operations. Examples of information that must be disclosed:

- Treatment: Providing, coordinating, or managing health care and related services, consultation between health care providers relating to a patient, or referral of a patient for health care from one provider to another. For example, we meet on a regular basis to discuss how to coordinate care to patients and schedule visits.
- Payment: Billing and collecting for services provided, determining plan eligibility and coverage, utilization review (UR), pre-certification, medical necessity review. For example, occasionally the insurance requests a copy of the medical record be sent to them for review prior to paying the bill.
- Health Care Operations: General agency administrative and business functions, quality assurance/improvement activities; medical review; auditing functions; developing clinical guidelines; determining the competence or qualifications of health care professionals; evaluating agency performance; conducting training programs with students or new employees; licensing, survey, certification, accreditation, and credentialing activities; internal auditing; and certain fundraising and marketing activities. For example, our agency periodically holds clinical record review meetings where the consulting professional of our record review committee will audit clinical records for meeting professional standards and utilization review.

The following uses and disclosures do not require your consent and include, but are not limited to, a release of information contained in financial records and/or medical records, including information concerning communicable diseases such as Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), drug/alcohol abuse, psychiatric diagnosis and treatment records and/or laboratory test results, medical history, treatment progress and/or any other related information to:

1. Your insurance company, self-funded or third-party health plan, Medicare, Medicaid or any other person or entity that may be responsible for paying or processing for payment any portion of your bill for services.
2. Any person or entity affiliated with or representing for purposes of administration, billing, and quality and risk management.
3. Any hospital, nursing home, or other health care facility to which you may be admitted.
4. Any assisted living or personal care facility of which you are a resident.

5. Any physician providing your care.
6. Licensing and accrediting bodies, including the information, contained in the OASIS Data Set to the state agency acting as a representative of the Medicare/Medicaid program.
7. Contact you to provide appointment reminders or information about other health activities we provide.
8. Contact you to raise funds for the Agency.
9. Other health care providers to initiate treatment.

We are permitted to use or disclose information about you without consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

1. In emergency treatment situations, if we attempt to obtain consent as soon as practicable after treatment.
2. Where substantial barriers to communicating with you exist and we determine that the consent is clearly inferred from the circumstances.
3. Where we are required by law to provide treatment and we are unable to obtain consent.
4. Where the use or disclosure of medical information about you is required by federal, state, or local law.
5. To provide information to state or federal public health authorities, as required by law to: prevent or control disease, injury, or disability; report births and deaths; report child abuse or neglect; report reactions to medications or problems with products; notify persons of recalls of products they may be using; notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition; and notify the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence (if you agree or when required or authorized by law).
6. Health care oversight activities such as audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure by a government health oversight agency as authorized by law to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights laws.
7. Certain judicial administrative proceedings if you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute. We may disclose medical information about you in response to a court or administrative order, a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.
8. Certain law enforcement purposes such as helping to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person, or to comply with a court order or subpoena and other law enforcement purposes.
9. To coroners, medical examiners, and funeral directors, in certain circumstances, for example, to identify a deceased person, determine the cause of death, or to assist in carrying out their duties.
10. For cadaveric organ, eye, or tissue donation purposes to communicate to organizations involved in procuring, banking, or transplanting organs and tissues (if you are an organ donor).
11. For certain research purposes under very select circumstances. We may use your health information for research. Before we disclose any of your health information for such research purposes, the project will be subject to an extensive approval process. We will usually request your written authorization before granting access to your individually identifiable health information.

12. To avert a serious threat to health and safety: To prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a particular person or the general public, such as when a person admits to participation in a violent crime or serious harm to a victim or is an escaped convict. Any disclosure, however, would only be to someone able to help prevent the threat.
13. For specialized government functions, including military and veteran's activities, national security and intelligence activities, protective services for the President and others, medical suitability determinations, correctional institution and custodial situations.
14. For Workers' Compensation purposes: Workers' Compensation or similar programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

We are permitted to use or disclose information about you without consent or authorization provided you are informed in advance and given the opportunity to agree to or prohibit or restrict the disclosure in the following circumstances:

1. Use of a directory (includes name, location, condition described in general terms) of individuals served by our Agency.
2. To a family member, relative, friend, or other identified person, the information relevant to such person's involvement in your care or payment for care; to notify a family member, relative, friend, or other identified person of the individual's location, general condition, or death.

Other uses and disclosures will be made only with your written authorization. That authorization may be revoked, in writing, at any time, except in limited situations.

## **Your Rights**

You have the right, subject to certain conditions, to:

- Request restrictions on uses and disclosures of your protected health information for treatment, payment, or health care operations. However, we are not required to agree to any requested restriction. Restrictions to which we agree will be documented. Agreements for further restrictions may, however, be terminated under applicable circumstances (e.g., emergency treatment).
- Confidential communication of protected health information. We will arrange for you to receive protected health information by reasonable alternative means or at alternative locations. Your request must be in writing. We do not require an explanation for the request as a condition of providing communications on a confidential basis and will attempt to honor reasonable requests for confidential communications.
- Inspect and obtain copies of protected health information which is maintained in a designated record set, except for psychotherapy notes, information compiled in reasonable anticipation of, or for use in, a civil, criminal or administrative action or proceeding, or protected health information that is subject to the Clinical Laboratory Improvements Amendments of 1988 [42 USC § 263a and 45 CFR 493 § (a)(2)]. If you request a copy of your health information we will provide it for you.
- If we deny access to protected health information, you will receive a timely, written denial in plain language that explains the basis for the denial, your review rights, and an explanation of how to exercise those rights. If we do not maintain the medical record, we will tell you where to request the protected health information.
- Request to amend protected health information for as long as the protected health information is maintained in the designated record set. A request to amend your record must be in writing and must include a reason to support the requested amendment. We will act on your request within sixty (60) days of receipt of the request. We may extend the time for such action by up to 30 days, if we provide you with a written explanation of the reasons for the delay and the date by which we will complete action on the request.

- We may deny the request for amendment if the information contained in the record was not created by us, unless the originator of the information is no longer available to act on the requested amendment; is not part of the designated medical record set; would not be available for inspection under applicable laws and regulations; and the record is accurate and complete. If we deny your request for amendment, you will receive a timely, written denial in plain language that explains the basis for the denial, your rights to submit a statement disagreeing with the denial and an explanation of how to submit the statement.
- Receive an accounting of disclosures of protected health information made by our agency for up to six (6) years prior to the date on which the accounting is requested for any reason other than for treatment, payment, or health operations, and other applicable exceptions. The written accounting includes the date of each disclosure, the name/address (if known) of the entity or person who received the protected health information, a brief description of the information disclosed, and a brief statement of the purpose of the disclosure or a copy of your written authorization or a written request for disclosure. We will provide the accountings within 60 days of receipt of a written request. However, we may extend the time period for providing the accounting by 30 days if we provide you with a written statement of the reasons for the delay and the date by which you will receive the information. We will provide the first accounting you request during any 12-month period without charge. Subsequent account requests may be subject to a reasonable cost-based fee.
- To obtain a paper copy of this notice even if you had agreed to receive this notice electronically, from us upon request.

### **Complaints**

If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated, you may complain to the Agency or to the Secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services. There will be no retaliation against you for filing a complaint. The complaint should be filed in writing, and should state the specific incident(s) in terms of subject, date, and other relevant matters. A complaint to the Secretary must be filed in writing within 180 days of when the act or omission complained of occurred, and must describe the acts or omissions believed to be in violation of applicable requirements. [45 CFR § 160.306]

### **Effective Date**

This notice is effective April 14, 2003. We are required to abide by the terms of the notice currently in effect, but we reserve the right to change these terms as necessary for all protected health information that we maintain. If we change the terms of this notice (while you are receiving service), we will promptly revise and distribute a revised notice to you as soon as practicable by mail, email (if you have agreed to electronic notice), or hand delivery.

### **Patient Rights & Responsibilities**

#### **Rights**

You, the patient, have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Confidentiality of patient records and information pertaining to a patient's care
- Be presented with information at admission in order to participate in and make decisions concerning your plan of care and treatment
- Be notified in advance of the types of care, frequency of care, and the clinical specialty providing care
- Be notified in advance of any change in your plan of care and treatment
- Be provided language interpretation and clearly illustrated instructions
- Be provided equipment and service in a timely manner
- Receive an itemized explanation of charges after primary payer source has paid
- Be informed of company ownership
- Express grievances without fear of reprisal or discrimination
- 24 hour emergency response

- Receive respect for the treatment of one's property
- Refuse or discontinue service or equipment (with timely removal of equipment) within the confines of the law and be informed of the consequences of this action
- Be informed of potential reimbursement for services under Medicare, Medicaid, or other third party insurers based on the patient's condition and insurance eligibility (to the best of the company's knowledge)
- Be notified of potential financial responsibility for products and services not fully reimbursed by Medicare, Medicaid, or other third party insurers (to the best of the company's knowledge)
- Be notified within 30 working days of any changes in charges for which you may be liable
- Be admitted for services only if the company can provide safe, professional care at the scope and level of intensity needed. If the company is unable to provide care, then the company will provide alternative resources.

## **Responsibilities**

You, the patient, are responsible for:

- Notifying the company when you will not be available for services
- Notifying the company if extra equipment or services will be needed
- Participation as agreed in the Plan of Care/Treatment
- Notifying the company of change of address, phone number or insurance status
- Notifying the company of any change in condition, physician orders, or physician
- Notifying the company of needed medical equipment repair
- Notifying the company when service or equipment is no longer needed
- Notifying the company of an incident involving clinicians or equipment
- Notifying the company in a timely manner for discharge
- Meeting the financial obligations of your health care as promptly as possible
- Providing accurate and complete information about present complaints, past illnesses, hospitalizations, medications, and other matters pertinent to your health
- Your actions, if you refuse treatment or do not follow the plan of care
- Providing a safe environment for our staff to perform the services outlined in your plan of care