



health information may be provided to a physician to whom you have been referred to ensure that the physician has the necessary information to diagnose or treat you.

In addition, we may disclose your protected health information from time to time to another physician or health care provider (e.g., a specialist or laboratory) who, at the request of your provider, becomes involved in your care by providing assistance with your healthcare, diagnosis or treatment to your provider. Finally, we may use and disclose protected health information for the treatment activities of another health care entity or provider.

**PAYMENT:** Your protected health information will be used, as needed, to obtain payment for your health care services. This may include certain activities that your health insurance plan may undertake before it approves or pays for the health care services we recommend for you such as: making a determination of eligibility or coverage for insurance benefits, reviewing services provided to you for medical necessity, and undertaking utilization review activities. For example, obtaining approval for a hospital stay may require that your relevant protected health information be disclosed to the health plan to obtain approval for the hospital admission. We may also use and disclose protected health information for the payment of activities of another healthcare entity or provider.

**HEALTHCARE OPERATIONS:** We may use or disclose, as needed, your protected health information in order to support the business activities of this practice. These activities include, but are not limited to, quality assessment activities, employee review activities, training of medical students, licensing, marketing and fundraising activities, and conducting or arranging for other business activities.

For example, we may disclose your protected health information to medical school students that see patients in our office. In addition, we may use a sign in sheet at the registration desk where you will be asked to sign your name and indicate your provider. We may also call you by name in the waiting room when your provider is ready to see you. We may use or disclose your protected health information as necessary when contacting you to remind you of an upcoming appointment. In addition, we may use or disclose your protected health information to another entity in order for that entity to conduct specific health care operations, which include quality assessment activities and reviewing the competence of the health care professionals .

We will share your protected health information with third party business associates that perform various activities for the practice. Whenever an arrangement between our office and a business associate involves the use or disclosure of your protected health information, we will have a written contract that contains terms that will protect the privacy of your protected health information.

We may use or disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to provide you with information about treatment alternatives or other health related benefits and services

that may be of interest to you. You may contact our privacy officer to request that these materials not be sent to you.

#### USES AND DISCLOSURES THAT MAY BE MADE WITH YOUR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION

Other uses and disclosures of your protected health information will be made only with your written authorization, unless otherwise permitted or required by law as described below. You may revoke such an authorization, at any time, in writing, except to the extent that your provider or the practice has taken an action in reliance on the use or disclosure indicated in the authorization.

#### USES AND DISCLOSURES THAT MAY BE MADE UNLESS YOU OBJECT

We may also use and disclose your protected health information in the following instances. In these instances, you have the opportunity to agree or object to the use or disclosure of all or part of your protected health information. If you are not present or able to agree or object to the use or disclosure of the protected health information, then your provider may, using professional judgment, determine whether the disclosure is in your best interest. In this case, only the protected health information that is relevant to your health care will be disclosed.

**OTHERS INVOLVED IN YOUR HEALTH CARE:** Unless you object, we may disclose to a member of your family, a relative, a close friend or any other person you identify, your protected health information that directly relates to that person's involvement in your health care. If you are unable to agree or object to such a disclosure, we may disclose such information as necessary if we determine that it is in your best interest based on our professional judgment. We may use or disclose protected health information to notify or assist in notifying a family member, personal representative or any other person that is responsible for your care of your location, general condition or death.

**DISASTER RELIEF:** We may use or disclose your protected health information to an authorized public or private entity to assist in disaster relief efforts and to coordinate uses and disclosures to family or other individuals involved in your health care.

#### DISCLOSURES THAT MAY BE MADE WITHOUT YOUR AUTHORIZATION OR OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT

We may use or disclose your protected health information in the following situations without your authorization. These situations include:

**REQUIRED BY LAW:** We may use or disclose your protected health information to the extent that the use or disclosure is required by law. The use or disclosure will be made in compliance with the law and will be limited to the relevant requirements of the law.

**PUBLIC HEALTH:** We may disclose your protected health information for public health activities and purposes to a public health authority that is permitted by law to collect or receive the information. The disclosure will be made for the purpose of controlling disease, injury or disability. We may also disclose your protected health information, if directed by the public health authority, to a foreign government agency that is collaborating with the public health authority.

**COMMUNICABLE DISEASES:** We may disclose your protected health information, as authorized by law, to a person who may have been exposed to a communicable disease or may otherwise be at risk of contracting or spreading the disease or condition.

**HEALTH OVERSIGHT:** We may disclose your protected health information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as audits, investigations, and inspections. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies that oversee the healthcare system, government benefit programs, other government regulatory programs and civil rights laws.

**ABUSE OR NEGLECT:** We may disclose your protected health information to public officials who are authorized by law to receive reports of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.

**FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION:** We may disclose your protected health information to a person or company required by the Food and Drug Administration to report adverse events, product defects or problems, biologic product deviations, track products, to enable product recalls, to make repairs or replacements, or to conduct post marketing surveillance, as required.

**LEGAL PROCEEDINGS:** We may disclose protected health information in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding in response to an order of a court or administrative tribunal (to the extent such disclosure is expressly authorized), and in certain conditions in response to a subpoena, discovery request or other lawful process.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT:** We may also disclose protected health information for law enforcement purposes. These law enforcement purposes include (1) legal processes and otherwise required by law (2) requests for limited information for identification and location purposes, (3) requests pertaining to victims of a crime, and (4) alerting law enforcement officials when (a) there is a suspicion that death has occurred or as a result of criminal conduct, (b) in the event of a crime occurs on the practice's premises, or (c) a medical emergency exists (not on the practice's premises) and it is likely that a crime has occurred.

**CORONERS, FUNERAL DIRECTORS, AND ORGAN DONATION:** We may disclose protected health information to a coroner or medical examiner for identification purposes, determining the cause of death or for the coroner or medical examiner to perform other duties authorized by law. We may also disclose protected health information to a funeral director, as authorized by law, in order to permit the funeral director to carry out their

duties. We may also disclose such information in reasonable anticipation of death. Protected health information may be used and disclosed for cadaveric organ, eye or tissue donation purposes.

**RESEARCH:** We may disclose your protected health information to researchers when their research has been approved by an institutional review board that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your protected health information.

**THREATENING ACTIVITY:** Consistent with applicable federal and state laws, we may disclose your protected health information, if we believe that the use or disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public. We may also disclose protected health information if it is necessary for law enforcement authorities to identify or apprehend an individual.

**MILITARY ACTIVITY AND NATIONAL SECURITY:** When the appropriate conditions apply, we may use or disclose protected health information of individuals who are Armed Forces personnel (1) for activities deemed necessary by appropriate military command authorities, (2) for the purpose of a determination by the Department of Veterans Affairs of your eligibility for benefits, or (3) to a foreign military authority if you are a member of that foreign military services. We may also disclose your protected health information to authorized federal officials for conducting national security and intelligence activities, including for the provision of protective services to the President or others legally authorized.

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION:** Your protected health information may be disclosed by us as authorized to comply with workers' compensation laws and others similar legally established programs.

**INMATES:** We may use or disclose your protected health information if you are an inmate of a correctional facility and your physician created or received your protected health information in the course of providing care to you.

**REQUIRED USES AND DISCLOSURES:** Under the law, we must make disclosures to you and when required by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to investigate or determine our compliance with the privacy standards applicable to your protected health information

## **YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION**

The following is a statement of your rights with respect to your protected health information and a brief description of how you may exercise these rights.

- You have the right to inspect and copy your protected health information. This means you may inspect and obtain a copy of protected health information about you that is contained in a designated record set for as long as we maintain the

protected health information. A “designated record set” contains medical and billing records and any other records that your Physician and the practice use for making decisions about you. Under Federal law, however, you may not inspect or copy the following records; psychotherapy notes, information compiled in reasonable anticipation of, or use and, a civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceeding, and protected health information that is subject to a law that prohibits access to protected health information. Depending on the circumstances, a decision to deny access may be reviewable. In some circumstances, you may have a right to have this decision reviewed. Please contact our privacy officer if you have questions about access to your medical record.

- You have the right to request a restriction of your protected health information. This means you may ask us not to use or disclose any part of your protected health information for the purposes of treatment, payment or health care operations. You may also request that any part of your protected health information not be disclosed to family members or friends who may be involved in your care or for notification purposes as described in this notice of privacy practices. Your request must state the specific restriction requested and to whom you want the restriction to apply. Your Physician is not required to agree to a restriction that you may request. If your Physician does not agree to the requested restriction, we may not use or disclose your protected health information in violation of that restriction unless it is needed to provide emergency treatment. With this in mind, please discuss any restriction you wish to request with your provider. You may request a restriction in writing to our privacy officer.
- You have the right to request to receive confidential communications from us by alternative means or at an alternative location. We will accommodate reasonable requests. We may also condition this accommodation by asking you for information as to how payment will be handled or specification of an alternative address or other method of contact. **We will not request in writing to our privacy contact.**
- You may have the right to have your provider amend your protected health information. This means you may request an amendment of protected health information about you in a designated record set for as long as we maintain this information. In certain cases, we may deny your request for an amendment. If we deny your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us and we may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and we will provide you with a copy of any such a rebuttal. Please contact our privacy officer if you have questions about amending your medical record.
- You have the right to receive an accounting of certain disclosures we have made, if any, of your protected health information. This right applies to disclosures for purposes other than treatment, payment or health care operations as described in this notice of privacy practices, as well as disclosures made pursuant to your authorization. It also excludes disclosures we may have made to you, for a facility directory, to family members or friends involved in your care, or for notification purposes. You have the right to receive specific information regarding these disclosures that occurred after April 14, 2003. You may request a shorter

time frame. The right to receive this information is subject to certain exceptions, restrictions and limitations.

- You have the right to obtain a paper copy of this notice from us, upon request, even if you have agreed to accept this notice electronically.

#### MAKING A COMPLAINT

You may complain to us or to the Secretary of Health and Human Services if you believe your privacy rights have been violated by us. You may file a complaint with us by notifying our privacy officer of your complaint. We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

You may contact our privacy contact, Brenda Brown, at (270) 769-0110 for further information about the complaint process.

Our privacy notice was originally published and became effective on April 14, 2003. This revision was published and became effective on July 1, 2006.