

# **Hippa Compliance Policies**

## Notice of Privacy Policies

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed, as well as how you can get access to this information. Please review carefully.

This practice uses and discloses health information about you for treatment, to obtain payment for treatment, for administrative purposes, and to evaluate the quality of care that you receive. This notice describes our privacy practices. You may request a copy of this notice at any time. For more information about this notice or our privacy practices and policies, please contact the person listed at the end of this notice.

### **Treatment, Payment, Health Care Operations**

#### **Treatment**

We are permitted to use and disclose your medical information to those involved in your treatment. The physician in this practice is a specialist. When we provide treatment, we may request that your primary care physician share our medical information with us. Also, we may provide your primary care physician information about your particular condition so that he or she can appropriately treat you for other medical conditions, if any.

#### **Payment**

We are permitted to use and disclose your medical information to bill and collect payment for the services provided to you. For example, we may complete a claim form to obtain payment from your insurer or HMO. The form will contain medical information, such as a description of the medical service provided to you, that your insurer or HMO needs to approve payment to us.

#### **Health Care Operations**

We are permitted to use and disclose your medical information for the purposes of health care operations, which are activities that support this practice and ensure quality care is delivered. Occasionally, we may engage the services of a professional to aid this practice in its compliance programs. This person will review billing and/or medical files to ensure we maintain our compliance with regulations and the law.

### **Disclosures that can be made without your authorization**

There are situations in which we are permitted by law to disclose or use your medical information without your written authorization or any opportunity to object. Those situations shall be described below. In other situations we will ask for your written authorization before using or disclosing any identifiable health information about you. If you choose to sign an authorization to disclose information, you may later revoke that authorization, in writing, to stop further uses and disclosures. However, any revocation will not apply to disclosures or uses already made or taken in reliance on that authorization.

#### **Public Health**

We may disclose your medical information for public health activities. Public health activities are mandated by federal, state, or local government for the collection of information about disease, vital statistics (births and deaths), or injury by a public health authority. We may disclose medical information, if authorized by law, to a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or to notify people of recalls of products they may be using.

#### **Abuse or Neglect**

We may also disclose medical information to a public agency authorized to receive reports of child abuse or neglect. Texas law requires physicians to report child abuse or neglect. Regulations also permit the disclosure of information to report abuse or neglect of elders or the disabled.

#### **Health Oversight**

We may disclose your medical information to a health oversight agency for those activities authorized by law. Examples of those activities include audits, investigations, licensure applications and inspections which are all government activities undertaken to monitor the health care delivery system and compliance with other laws, such as civil rights laws.

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## **Legal Proceedings and Law Enforcement**

We may disclose your medical information in the course of judicial or administrative proceedings in response to an order of the court or other appropriate legal process. Certain requirements must be met before the information is disclosed:

If asked by a law enforcement official, we may disclose your medical information, under limited circumstances, provided that the information:

- + Is released pursuant to a legal process, such as a warrant or subpoena;
- + Pertains to a victim of crime and you are incapacitated;
- + Pertains to a person who has died under circumstances that may be related to criminal conduct;
- + Is about a victim of a crime and we are unable to obtain the person's agreement;
- + Is released because of a crime that occurred on these premises; or
- + Is release to locate a fugitive, missing person, or suspect.

We may also release information if we believe the disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen an imminent threat to the health or safety of a person.

## **Worker's Compensation**

We may disclose your medical information as required by the Texas Worker's Compensation Law.

## **Inmates**

If you are an inmate, or under custody of law enforcement, we may release your medical information to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release is permitted to allow the institution to provide you with medical care, to protect your health or the health of others, or for the safety and security of the institution.

## **Military, National Security and Intelligence Activities, Protection of the President**

We may disclose your medical information for specialized governmental functions such as separation or discharge from the military service, requests as necessary by appropriate military command officers (if applicable), authorized national security and intelligence activities, as well as authorized actions for the provision of protective services for the President of the United States, other authorized government officials, or foreign heads of state.

## **Research, Organ Donation, Coroners, Medical Examiners, and Funeral Directors**

When an Institutional Review Board or privacy board has approved a research project and its privacy protections, we may release medical information to researchers for research purposes. We may release medical information to organ procurement organizations for the purpose of facilitating organ, eye, or tissue donation if you are a donor. Also, we may release your information to a coroner or medical examiner to identify a deceased or a cause of death. Further, we may release your medical information to a funeral director where such a disclosure is necessary for the director to carry out his duties.

## **Required by Law**

We may release your medical information where the disclosure is required by law.

## **Your Rights under Federal Privacy Regulations**

The United States Department of Health and Human Services created regulations intended to protect patient privacy as required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA). Those regulations create several privileges that patients may exercise. We will not retaliate against any patient that exercises their HIPPA rights.

## **Requested Restrictions**

You may request that we restrict or limit how your protected health information is used or disclosed for treatment, payment, or health care operations. We do NOT have to agree to this restriction, but if we do agree, we will comply with your request except under emergency circumstances.

To request a restriction, submit the following in writing: (a) The information to be restricted, (b) what kind of restriction you are requesting (on use or disclosure), and (c) to whom the limits apply. Please send the request to the address and person listed at the end of this notice.

You may also request that we limit disclosure to family members, other relatives, or close personal friends that may or may not be involved in your care.

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### **Receiving Confidential Communications via Alternative Means**

You may request that we send communications of protected health information by alternative means or to an alternative location. This request must be made in writing to the person listed below. We are required to accommodate only *reasonable* requests. Please specify in your correspondence exactly how you want us to communicate with you and, if you are directing us to send it to a particular place, the contact/address information.

### **Inspection and Copies of Protected Health Information**

You may inspect and/or copy health information that is within the designated record set, which is information that is used to make decisions about your care. Texas law requires that request for copies be made in writing and we ask that requests for inspection of your health information also be made in writing. Please send your request to the person listed below.

We can refuse to provide some of the information you ask to inspect or ask to be copied if the information:

- + Includes psychotherapy notes.
- + Includes the identity of a person who provided information if it was obtained under a promise of confidentiality.
- + Is subject to the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988.
- + Has been compiled in anticipation of litigation.

We can refuse to provide access to, or copies of, some information for other reasons, provided that we provide a review of our decision on your request. Another licensed health care provider who was not involved in the prior decision to deny access will make any such review.

Texas law requires that we be ready to provide copies or a narrative within 15 days of your request. We will inform you of when the records are ready or if we believe access should be limited. If we deny access, we will inform you in writing.

HIPPA permits us to charge a reasonable cost based fee. The Texas State Board of Medical Examiners (TSBME) has set limits on fees or copies of medical records that under some circumstances may be lower than the charges permitted by HIPPA. In any event, the *lower* of the fee permitted by HIPPA or the fee permitted by the TSBME will be charged.

### **Amendment of Medical Information**

You may request an amendment of your medical information in the designated record set. Any such request must be made in writing to the person listed below. We will respond within 60 days of your request. We may refuse to allow an amendment if the information:

- + Wasn't created by this practice or the physicians here in this practice.
- + Is not part of the Designated Record Set.
- + Is not available for inspection because of an appropriate denial.
- + Is accurate and complete.

Even if we refuse to allow an amendment you are permitted to include a patient statement about the information at issue in your medical record. If we refuse to allow an amendment we will inform you in writing. If we approve the amendment, we will inform you in writing, allow the amendment to be made and tell others that we know have the incorrect information.

### **Accounting of Certain Disclosures**

The HIPPA privacy regulations permit you to request, and us to provide, an accounting of disclosures that were made other than for treatment, payment, health care operations, or made via an authorization signed by you or your representative. Please submit any request for an accounting to the person listed below. Your first accounting of disclosures (within a 12 month period) will be free. For additional requests within that period we are permitted to charge for the cost of providing the list. If there is a charge we will notify you and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request *before* any costs are incurred.

### **Appointment Reminders, Treatment Alternative, and Other Health-related Benefits**

We may contact you by telephone, mail or both, to provide appointment reminders, information about treatment alternatives, or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

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### **Complaints**

If you are concerned that your privacy rights have been violated, you may contact the person listed below. You may also send a written complaint to the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Their address follows:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
HIPPA Complaint  
7500 Security Blvd., C5-24-04  
Baltimore, MD 21244

### **Our promise to You**

We are required by law and regulation to protect the privacy of your medical information, to provide you with this notice of our privacy practices with respect to protected health information, and to abide by the terms of the notice of privacy practices in effect.

### **Questions and Contact Person for Requests**

If you have any questions or want to make a request pursuant to the rights described above, please contact:

We may change our policies and this notice at any time and have those revised policies apply to all the protected health information that we maintain. If or when we change our notice, we will post the new notice in the office where it can be seen.

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