



Notice of Privacy Practices

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU MAY OBTAIN ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION, PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

If you have any questions regarding this Notice please contact the Privacy Officer.

We understand that medical information about you and your health is personal. Therefore, we are committed to protecting such information. This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how we may use and disclose your *protected health information* to carry out treatment, payment or health care operations and for other purposes that are permitted or required by law. It also describes your rights to access and control your protected health information as well as certain obligations we have regarding the use and disclosure of such information. "*Protected health information*" is information about you, including but not limited to demographic information, that may identify you and that relates to your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition and related health care services.

We are required to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices. We may change the terms of our notice at any time. The new notice will be effective for all protected health information that we maintain at that time. Upon your request, we will provide you with any revised Notice of Privacy Practices by calling the office and requesting that a revised copy be sent to you in the mail or asking for one at the time of your next appointment.

1. USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

The following categories describe different ways that we may use and disclose medical information. For each category of uses or disclosures, we will explain that we mean and attempt to offer some examples. Not every possible use of disclosure in a category will be listed. All of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose information, however, will fall with one of the categories below.

A. USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

You may be asked by your Physician to sign a consent form. Please review the consent form carefully. Once you have consented to use and disclosure of your protected health information for treatment, payment and health care operations by signing the form, your Physician may use or disclose your protected health information as described in this Section 1. Your protected health information may be used and disclosed by your Physician, our office staff and others outside of our office that are involved in your care and treatment of the purpose of providing health care services to you. Your protected health information may also be used and disclosed to pay your health care bills and to support the operation of the Physician's practice.

Following are examples of the types of uses and disclosures of your protected health care information that the Physician's office is permitted to make once you have signed our consent form. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to describe the types of uses and disclosures that may be made by our office once you have provided your consent.

Treatment: We may use and disclosure your protected health information to provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and any related services. This includes the coordination or management of your health care with a third party that has already obtained your permission to have access to your protected health information. For example, as necessary, we would disclose your protected health information to a home health agency that provides care to you. We may also disclose protected health information to other Physicians who may be treating you after we have obtained the necessary authorization from you to disclose your protected health information. For example, your protected health information might be provided to a Physician to whom you have been referred by this office to ensure that Physician has all the necessary information to diagnose or treat you.

In addition, from time-to-time we may disclose your protected health information to another Physician or health care provider (e.g., a specialist or laboratory) who, at the request of your Physician, becomes involved in your care by providing assistance to your Physician with your health care diagnosis or treatment.

Psychotherapy notes: The following uses and disclosures of your protected health information require a written authorization from you (1) if your protected health information is used or disclosed for marketing purpose; (2) if the disclosure constitutes a sale of your personal health information, and; (3) for most uses and disclosures of psychotherapy notes.

Payment: Your protected health information may be used as needed, to obtain payment for health care services. This may include certain activities that your health insurance plan may undertake before it approves or pays for 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 in order to obtain approval for the hospital admission.

Healthcare Operations: We may use or disclose, as-needed, your protected health information in order to support the business activities of your Physician's practice. These activities may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Appointment Reminders: We may use and disclose medical information, as necessary to contact you to remind you of an appointment at our office.

Sign-In and Waiting Room: We may use a sign-in sheet at the registration desk where you will be asked to sign your name and indicate your Physician. And we may also call you by name in the waiting room when your Physician is ready to see you, however, in no instance will the first and last name be used together.

Training: We may disclose your protected health information to medical school students that see you at our office as part of their training.

Internal Reviews and Quality Assessment: We may disclose your protected health information in the course of conducting internal reviews of our employees or in internal quality assessment activities of our office.

Business Associates: We may share your protected health information with third party "business associates" that perform various activities (e.g., billing, transcription services) 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 in place with such business associate that contains terms that will protect the privacy of your protected health information.

Treatment Alternatives: As necessary, we may use or disclose your protected health information to provide you with information about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

Marketing and Health-Related Benefits and Services: We may also use and disclose your protected health information for other marketing activities. For example, your name and address may be used to send you a newsletter about our practice and the services we offer. We may also send you information about products or services that we believe may be beneficial to you. You may contact our Privacy Officer at 281-364-7889 to request that these materials not be sent to you.

Fundraising Activities: We may use or disclose your demographic information and the dates that you received treatment from your physician, as necessary, in order to contact you for fundraising activities supported by our office. If you do not want to receive these materials, please contact our Privacy Officer at 281-364-7889 to request that these materials not be sent to you.

B. Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information Based upon 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 authorization, at any time, in writing, except to the extent that your Physician or the Physician's practice has taken an action in reliance on the use or disclosure indicated in the authorization.

Any uses and disclosures of your protected health information not covered by this notice will only be made with your written permission. You can revoke this authorization at any time by completing a written request informing us of your wishes. For more information see: www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/consumers/noticepp.html

C. Other Permitted and Required Uses and Disclosures That May Be Made With your Consent, Authorization or Opportunity to Object.

We may use and disclose your protected health information in the following 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 Physician 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.

Individuals involved in your care or payment for your 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 or payment for your 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 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.

Emergencies: we may use or disclose your protected health information in an emergency treatment situation. If this happens, your Physician shall try to obtain your consent as soon as reasonably practicable after the delivery of treatment. If your Physician or another Physician in the practice is required by law to treat you and the Physician has attempted to obtain your consent but is unable to obtain your consent, he or she may still use or disclose your protected health information to treat you.

Communication Barriers: We may use and disclose your protected health information if your Physician or another Physician in the practice attempts to obtain consent from you but is unable to do so due to substantial communication barriers and Physician determines, using professional judgment, that you intend to consent to use or disclosure under the circumstances.

D. Other Permitted and Required Uses and Disclosures That May Be Made Without Your Consent, Authorization or Opportunity to Object

We may use or disclose your protected health information in the following situations without your consent or 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. You will be notified as required by law, of any such uses or disclosures.

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, if 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 health care system, government benefit programs, other government regulatory programs and civil rights laws.

Abuse or Neglect: We may disclose your protected information to a public health authority that is authorized by law to receive reports of child abuse or neglect. In addition, we may disclose your protected health information if we believe

that you have been a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence to the governmental entity or agency authorized to receive such information. In this case, the disclosure will be made consistent with the requirements of applicable federal and state laws.

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.

Law Enforcement: We may also disclose protected health information, so long as applicable legal requirements are met, for law enforcement purposes. These law enforcement purposes include (1) legal processes and other wise required by law, (2) limited information requests for identification and location purposes, (3) pertaining to victims of crime, (4) suspicion that death has occurred as a result of criminal conduct, (5) in the event that a crime occurs on the premises of the practice and (6) medical emergency (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 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 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 disclosed 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.

Criminal 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 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 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 other 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 requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, Section 164.500 et. seq.

2. YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU.

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.

A. 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 uses 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 in, a civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceeding and protected health information that is subject to 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 at Interfaith Community Clinic if you have questions about access to your medical record.

B. You have the right to request an electronic copy of your medical record.

You can ask to see or get an electronic or paper copy of your medical record and other health information we have about you. We will provide a copy or a summary of your health information, usually within 30 days of your request. We may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee.

C. You have the right to request a restriction of your protected health information.

This means you may ask us, in writing, not to use or disclose any part of your protected health information for the purposes of treatment, payment or healthcare 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 written 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 the Physician believes it is in your best interest to permit use and disclosure of your protected health information, your protected health will not be restricted. If your Physician does 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 Physician. You may request a restriction by contracting our Privacy Officer.

D. 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 an explanation from you as to the basis for the request. Please make this request in writing to our Privacy Officer.

E. You may have the right to have your Physician 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 will provide you with a copy of any such rebuttal. Please contact our Privacy Officer to determine if you have questions about amending your medical record.

F. You have 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 healthcare operations as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices. It 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 timeframe. The right to receive this information is subject to certain exceptions, restrictions and limitations.

G. 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.

3. BREACH NOTIFICATION

We are required by law to maintain the privacy and security of your protected health information. We will let you know promptly if a breach occurs that may have compromised the privacy or security of your information.

4. COMPLAINTS

You may complain to us or to 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 the Privacy Officer at Interfaith Community Clinic, 101 Pine Manor Drive, Oak Ridge North, Texas 77385, 281-364-7889 for further information about the complaint process.