

## *Notice of Privacy Practices*

**Phone: (860) 969-6400**

**Fax: (860) 969-6392**

Date of Last Revision: May 11, 2018

*This information is made available on request by a patient*

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.

This notice describes our Practice's privacy policies, which extend to:

- Any health care professional authorized to enter information into your chart (including physicians, PAs, Technologists, Medical Assistants, etc.);
- All areas of the Practice (front desk, administration, billing and collection, etc.);
- All employees, staff and other personnel that work for or with our Practice;
- Our business associates (including a billing service, or facilities to which we refer patients), on-call physicians, and so on.

The Practice provides this Notice to comply with the Privacy Regulations issued by the Department of Health and Human Services in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

### **OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION:**

We understand that your medical information is personal to you, and we are committed to protecting the information about you. As your patient, we create records about your health, our care for you, and the services and/or items we provide to you as our patient. We need this record to provide for your care and to comply with certain legal requirements.

We are required by law to:

- make sure that the protected health information about you is kept private;
- provide you with a Notice of our Privacy Practices and your legal rights with respect to protected health information about you; and
- follow the conditions of the Notice that is currently in effect.

### **HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU.**

The following categories describe different ways that we use and disclose protected health information that we have and share with others. Each category of uses or disclosures provides a general explanation and provides some examples of uses. Not every use or disclosure in a category is either listed or actually in place. The explanation is provided for your general information only.

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- Medical Treatment. We use previously given medical information about you to provide you with current or prospective medical treatment or services. Therefore we may, and most likely will, disclose medical information about you to doctors, nurses, technicians, medical students, or hospital personnel who are involved in taking care of you. For example, a doctor to whom we refer you for ongoing or further care may need your medical record. Different areas of the Practice also may share medical information about you including your record(s), prescriptions, requests of lab work and x-rays. We may also discuss your medical information with you to recommend possible treatment options or alternatives that may be of interest to you. We also may disclose medical information about you to people outside the Practice who may be involved in your medical care after you leave the Practice; this may include your family members, or other personal representatives authorized by you or by a legal mandate (a guardian or other person who has been named to handle your medical decisions, should you become incompetent).
- Payment. We may use and disclose medical information about you for services and procedures so they may be billed and collected from you, an insurance company, or any other third party. For example, we may need to give your health care information, about treatment you received at the Practice, to obtain payment or reimbursement for the care. We may also tell your health plan and/or referring physician about a treatment you are going to receive to obtain prior approval or to determine whether your health plan will cover the treatment, to facilitate payment of a referring physician, or the like.
- Health Care Operations. We may use and disclose medical information about you so that we can run our Practice more efficiently and make sure that all of our patients receive quality care. These uses may include reviewing our treatment and services to evaluate the performance of our staff, deciding what additional services to offer and where, deciding what services are not needed, and whether certain new treatments are effective. We may also disclose information to doctors, nurses, technicians, medical students, and other personnel for review and learning purposes. We may also combine the medical information we have with medical information from other Practices to compare how we are doing and see where we can make improvements in the care and services we offer. We may remove information that identifies you from this set of medical information so others may use it to study health care and health care delivery without learning who the specific patients are.

We may also use or disclose information about you for internal or external utilization review and/or quality assurance, to business associates for purposes of helping us to comply with our legal requirements, to auditors to verify our records, to billing companies to aid us in this process and the like. We shall endeavor, at all times when business associates are used, to advise them of their continued obligation to maintain the privacy of your medical records.

- Appointment and Patient Recall Reminders. We may ask that you sign in writing at the Receptionists' Desk, a "Sign In" log on the day of your appointment with the Practice. We may use and disclose medical information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment for medical care with the Practice or that you are due to receive periodic care from the Practice. This contact may be by phone, in writing, e-mail, or otherwise and may involve the leaving an e-mail, a message on an answering machines, or otherwise which could (potentially) be received or intercepted by others.
- Emergency Situations. In addition, we may disclose medical information about you to an organization assisting in a disaster relief effort or in an emergency situation so that your family can be notified about your condition, status and location.

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- Research. Under certain circumstances, we may use and disclose medical information about you for research purposes regarding medications, efficiency of treatment protocols and the like. We will obtain an Authorization from you before using or disclosing your individually identifiable health information unless the authorization requirement has been waived in accordance with federal law.
- Required By Law. We will disclose medical information about you to governmental or other authorities when required or authorized to do so by federal, state or local law.
- To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety. We may use and disclose medical information about you when necessary to prevent a serious threat either to your specific health and safety or the health and safety of the public or another person.
- Organ and Tissue Donation. If you are an organ donor, we may release medical information to organizations that handle organ procurement or organ, eye or tissue transplantation or to an organ donation bank, as necessary to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation.
- Workers' Compensation. We may release medical information about you for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.
- Public Health Risks. Law or public policy may require us to disclose medical information about you for public health activities. These activities generally include the following:
  - to prevent or control disease, injury or disability;
  - to report births and deaths;
  - to report child abuse or neglect;
  - to report reactions to medications or problems with products;
  - to notify people of recalls of products they may be using;
  - to notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition;
  - to notify the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence. We will only make this disclosure if you agree or when required or authorized by law.
- Investigation and Government Activities. We may disclose medical information to a local, state or federal agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure. These activities are necessary for the payor, the government and other regulatory agencies to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights laws.
- Lawsuits and Disputes. 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. We may also disclose medical information about you in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute.

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- Law Enforcement. We may release medical information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official:
  - In response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons or similar process;
  - To identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person;
  - About the victim of a crime if, under certain limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement;
  - About a death we believe may be the result of criminal conduct;
  - About criminal conduct at the Practice; and
  - In emergency circumstances to report a crime; the location of the crime or victims; or the identity, description or location of the person who committed the crime.
- Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors. We may release medical information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death. We may also release medical information about patients of the Practice to funeral directors as necessary to carry out their duties.
- Inmates. If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement official, we may release medical information about you to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be necessary (1) for the institution to provide you with health care; (2) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of others; or (3) for the safety and security of the correctional institution.
- State Law Restrictions. HIV and Mental Health. In the case of HIV-related information, or mental health records from a psychiatrist, special protections apply under Connecticut law. With certain exceptions, your permission is generally required by law to release this information.
- Psychotherapy Notes; Marketing; Sale of PHI. Your authorization will be required for most uses and disclosure of any psychotherapy notes maintained by the Practice. Your authorization will also be required for us to use and disclose your medical information for marketing purposes or to sell your medical information. Other uses and disclosures of your medical information not described in this Notice will be made only with your written authorization. You have a right to revoke such authorization at any time, provided the revocation is in writing, unless we have taken action in reliance on the authorization.
- Fundraising. From time to time we may contact you to raise funds on behalf of the Practice. You will be informed of any such fundraising activities and provided with an opportunity to opt out of these communications.

## COMPLAINTS

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with the Practice or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with the Practice, contact our Compliance Personnel, who will direct you on how to file an office complaint. All complaints must be submitted in writing, and all complaints shall be investigated, without repercussion to you.

Compliance Personnel can be reached at this number: (860) 714-7121. **You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.**

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### **OTHER USES OF MEDICAL INFORMATION**

Other uses and disclosures of medical information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written permission, unless those uses can be reasonably inferred from the intended uses above. If you have provided us with your permission to use or disclose medical information about you, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, we will no longer use or disclose medical information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you.

### **BREACH**

The Practice has an obligation to notify you in the event of a breach of your unsecured medical information. You have a right to receive, and will receive, written notice from us if we determine that a breach of this type has occurred.

### **PATIENT RIGHTS**

THIS SECTION DESCRIBES YOUR RIGHTS AND THE OBLIGATIONS OF THIS PRACTICE REGARDING THE USE AND DISCLOSURE OF YOUR MEDICAL INFORMATION.

You have the following rights regarding medical information we maintain about you:

- **Right to Inspect and Copy.** You have the right to inspect and copy medical information that may be used to make decisions about your care. This includes your own medical and billing records, but does not include psychotherapy notes. Upon proof of an appropriate legal relationship, records of others related to you or under your care (guardian or custodial) may also be disclosed.

To inspect and copy your medical record, you must submit your request in writing. Ask the front desk person for the name of the Privacy Officer or Privacy Contact. If you request a copy of the information, we may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing or other supplies associated with your request.

We may deny your request to inspect and copy in certain very limited circumstances. If you are denied access to medical information, you will generally be entitled to request review of the denial. Another licensed health care professional chosen by the Practice will then review your request and the denial. The person conducting the review will not be the person who denied your request. We will comply with the outcome and recommendations from that review.

- **Right to Amend.** If you feel that the medical information we have about you in your record is incorrect or incomplete, then you may ask us to amend the information, following the procedure below. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the Practice maintains your medical record. To request an amendment, your request must be submitted in writing, along with your intended amendment and a reason that supports

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your request to amend. The amendment must be dated and signed by you. We may deny your request for an amendment if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support the request. In addition, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that:

- Was not created by us, unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment;
  - Is not part of the medical information kept by or for the Practice;
  - Is not part of the information which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or
  - Is accurate and complete.
- Right to an Accounting of Disclosures. You have the right to request an “accounting of disclosures.” This is a list of the disclosures we made of medical information about you, to others. To request this list, you must submit your request in writing. Your request must state a time period not longer than six (6) years back.
- Right to Request Restrictions. You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the medical information we use or disclose about you for treatment, payment or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the medical information we disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care (a family member or friend). For example, you could ask that we not use or disclose information about a particular treatment you received.

*In most situations, we are not required to agree to your request.* If we do agree, we will comply with your request except that we shall not comply, even with a written request, in an emergency situation, if the Department of Health and Human Services is investigating our HIPAA compliance status, or if we are permitted or required by law to disclose the information, such as in response to subpoena or law enforcement demands.

To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing. In your request, you indicate:

- what information you want to limit; and
- how you wish us to limit or use or disclosure of this information.

We are, however, required to honor your request for a restriction if you request that we not use or disclose your PHI in instances where the disclosure is to a health plan for payment or health care operations (not treatment) and the PHI pertains solely to a service where you paid out of pocket and in full.

- Right to Request Confidential Communications. You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you at work or by mail, that we not leave voice mail or e-mail, or the like. To request confidential communications, you must make your request in writing. We will not ask you the reason for your request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must specify how or where you wish us to contact you.

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- Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice. You have the right to a paper copy of this notice. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. Even if you have agreed to receive this notice electronically, you are still entitled to a paper copy of this notice.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH SAINT FRANCIS HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER**

I acknowledge and agree that the Practice will enter my PHI in a database maintained by the Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center (the "Hospital"). The PHI maintained in the database will be used by this Practice for treatment, payment and health care operations purposes. The Practice may also disclose your PHI maintained in the database to another provider (i) for treatment purposes, (ii) for payment purposes and (iii) for health care operations if you have or had a relationship with the other provider and only for the following reasons: (a) conducting quality assessment and improvement activities, including outcomes evaluation and development of clinical guidelines, provided that the obtaining of generalizable knowledge is not the primary purpose of any studies resulting from such activities; population-based activities relating to improving health or reducing health care costs, protocol development, case management and care coordination, contacting of health care providers and patients with information about treatment alternatives; and related functions that do not include treatment; or (b) reviewing the competence or qualifications of health care professionals, evaluating practitioner and provider performance, health plan performance, conducting training programs in which students, trainees, or practitioners in areas of health care learn under supervision to practice or improve their skills as health care providers, training of non-health care professionals, accreditation, certification, licensing, or credentialing activities; or (c) health care fraud and abuse detection or compliance. The PHI may also disclose your PHI maintained in the database to the Saint Francis Health Care Partners ("SFHCP") for use by the SFHCP as a Business Associate of the Group for health care operational purposes, including without limitation, quality and utilization review of health care services.