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## Notice of Privacy Practices

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.

Privacy is a very important concern for all those who come to this office. It is also complicated, because of the many federal and state laws and my professional ethics. Because the rules are so complicated, some parts of this notice are very detailed. If you have any questions, I will be happy to help you understand my procedures and your rights.

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### A. Introduction: To my clients

This notice will tell you how I handle your medical information. It tells how I use this information in my office, how I share it with other professionals and organizations, and how you can see it. I want you to know all of this so that you can make the best decisions for yourself and your family. If you have any questions or want to know more about anything in this notice, please ask me for more explanations or more details.

### B. What I mean by your medical information

Each time you visit me or any doctor's office, hospital, clinic, or other health care provider, information is collected about you and your physical and mental health. It may be information about your past, present, or future health or conditions, or the tests and treatment you got from me or from others, or about payment for health care. The

information I collect from you is called “PHI,” which stands for “protected health information.” This information goes into your **medical or health care records** in my office.

In this office, your PHI is likely to include these kinds of information:

- \_ Your history: Things that happened to you as a child; your school and work experiences; your marriage and other personal history.
- \_ Reasons you came for treatment: Your problems, complaints, symptoms, or needs.
- \_ Diagnoses: These are the medical terms for your problems or symptoms.
- \_ A treatment plan: This is a list of the treatments and other services that I think will best help you.
- \_ Progress notes: Each time you come in, I write down some things about how you are doing, what I notice about you, and what you tell me.
- \_ Records I get from others who treated you or evaluated you.
- \_ Information about medications you took or are taking.
- \_ Billing and insurance information

There may also be other kinds of information that go into your health care records here.

I use PHI for many purposes. For example, I may use it:

- \_ To plan your care and treatment.
- \_ To decide how well treatments are working for you.
- \_ When I talk with other health care professionals who are also treating you, such as your family doctor or the professional who referred you to me.
- \_ To show that you actually received services from me, which I billed to you or to your health insurance company.
- \_ To improve the way I do my job by measuring the results of my work.

When you understand what is in your record and what it is used for, you can make better decisions about who, when, and why others should have this information.

Although your health care records in my office are my physical property, the information belongs to you. You can read your records, and if you want a copy I can make one for you. If you find anything in your records that you think is incorrect or believe that something important is missing, you can ask me to amend (add information to) your records, although I don't have to agree to do that.

### **C. Privacy and the laws about privacy**

I am required to tell you about privacy because of a federal law, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). HIPAA requires me to keep your PHI private and to give you this notice about my legal duties and my privacy practices. I will obey the rules described in this notice. If I change my privacy practices, they will apply to all the PHI I keep. I will also post the new notice of privacy practices on my website where everyone can see it. You or anyone else can also get a copy at any time.

### **D. How your protected health information can be used and shared**

Except in some special circumstances, when I use your PHI in this office or disclose it to others, I share only the **minimum necessary** PHI needed for those other people to do their jobs. The law gives you rights to know about your PHI, to know how it is used, and to have a say in how it is shared. So I will tell you more about what I do with

your information.

Mainly, I will use and disclose your PHI for routine purposes to provide for your care, and I will explain more about that below. For other uses, I must tell you about them and ask you to sign a written authorization form. However, the law also says that there are some uses and disclosures that don't need your consent or authorization.

#### 1. Uses and disclosures with your consent

After you have read this notice, you will be asked to sign a separate **consent form** to allow me to use and share your PHI. In almost all cases I intend to use your PHI in my office or share it with other people or organizations to provide treatment to you, arrange for payment for my services, or some other business functions called "health care operations." In other words, I need information about you and your condition to provide care to you. You have to agree to let me collect the information, use it, and share it to care for you properly. Therefore, you must sign the consent form before I begin to treat you. If you do not agree and consent I cannot treat you.

##### a. The basic uses and disclosure: For treatment, payment, and health care operations

Next I will tell you more about how your information will be used for treatment, payment, and health care operations.

*For treatment.* I use your medical information to provide you with mental health treatments or services. These might include individual, family, or group therapy, treatment planning, or measuring the benefits of my services.

I may share your PHI with others who provide treatment to you. I am likely to share your information with your personal physician. I may refer you to other professionals or consultants for services I cannot provide. When I do this, I need to tell them things about you and your conditions. I will get back their findings and opinions, and those will go into your records in my office. If you receive treatment in the future from other professionals, I can also share your PHI with them.

*For payment.* I may use your information to bill you, your insurance, or others, so I can be paid for the treatments I provide to you. I may contact your insurance company (or other third party payer) to find out exactly what your insurance covers. I may have to tell them about your diagnoses, what treatments you have received, and the changes I expect in your conditions. I will need to tell them about when we met, your progress, and other similar things.

*For health care operations.* Using or disclosing your PHI for health care operations goes beyond my care and your payment. For example, I may use your PHI to see where I can make improvements in the care and services I provide. I may be required to supply some information to some government health agencies, so they can study disorders and treatment and make plans for services that are needed. If I do, your name and personal information will be removed from what I send.

#### 2. Uses and disclosures that require your authorization

If I want to use your information for any purpose besides those described above, I need your permission on an **authorization form**. I don't expect to need this very often. If you do allow me to use or disclose your PHI, you can cancel that permission in writing at any time. I would then stop using or disclosing your information for that purpose. Of course, I cannot take back any information I have already disclosed or used with your permission.

### 3. Uses and disclosures that don't require your consent or authorization

The law lets me use and disclose some of your PHI without your consent or authorization in some cases. Here are some examples of when I might do this.

#### a. When required by law

There are some federal, state, or local laws that require me to disclose PHI:

I have to report suspected child abuse or suspected abuse of a dependent adult.

If you are involved in a lawsuit or legal proceeding, and I receive a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process, I may have to release some of your PHI. I will only do so after trying to tell you about the request and consulting about measures I can take to try to protect the information requested. I have to disclose some information to the government agencies that check on me to see that I am obeying the privacy laws.

#### b. For law enforcement purposes

I may release medical information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official to investigate a crime or criminal.

#### c. For public health activities

I may disclose some of your PHI to agencies that investigate diseases or injuries.

#### d. To prevent a serious threat to health or safety

If I come to believe that there is a serious threat to your health or safety, or that of another person or the public, I can disclose some of your PHI. I will only do this to persons who can prevent the danger.

#### e. For consultation purposes

I discuss cases with colleagues and consultants in order to provide you with the best possible service. When I do this, I will take measures to ensure that you cannot be identified.

### 4. Uses and disclosures where you have an opportunity to object

I can share some information about you with your family or close others. I will only share information with those involved in your care and anyone else you choose, such as close friends or clergy. I will ask you which persons you want me to tell, and what information you want me to tell them, about your condition or treatment. You can tell me what you want, and I will honor your wishes as long as it is not against the law.

If it is an emergency, and so I cannot ask if you disagree, I can share information if I believe that it is what you would have wanted and if I believe it will help you if I do share it. If I do share information, in an emergency, I will tell you as soon as I can. If you don't approve, I will stop, as long as it is not against the law.

### 5. An accounting of disclosures I have made

When I disclose your PHI, I may keep some records regarding who I sent it to, when I sent it, and what I sent. You can get an accounting (a list) of many of these disclosures.

### **E. Your rights concerning your health information**

1. You can ask me to communicate with you about your health and related issues in a particular way or at a certain place that is more private for you. For example, you can ask me to call you at home, and not at work, to schedule or cancel an appointment. I will try my best to do as you ask.
2. You have the right to ask me to limit what I tell people involved in your care or with payment for your care. I don't have to agree to your request, but if I do agree, I will honor it except when it is against the law, or in an emergency, or when the information is necessary to treat you.
3. You have the right to look at the health information I have about you, such as your medical and billing records. You can get a copy of these records.
4. If you believe that the information in your record is incorrect or missing something important, you can ask me to make additions to your records to correct the situation. You have to make this request in writing. You must also tell me the reasons you want to make the changes.
5. You have the right to a copy of this notice. If I change this notice, I will post the new one on my website, and you can always get a copy from me.
6. You have the right to file a complaint if you believe your privacy rights have been violated. You can file a complaint with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. All complaints must be in writing. Filing a complaint will not change the health care I provide to you in any way.

The effective date of this notice is December 2, 2015.