



## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICE

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to the information. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

### **I. Our Duty to Safeguard Your Protected Health Information.**

Individually identifiable information about your past, present or future health or condition, the provision of health care to you, or payment for the health care is considered "Protected Health Information" (PHI). We are required to extend certain protections to your PHI, and to give you this notice about our privacy practices that explains how, when and why we may use or disclose only the minimum necessary PHI to accomplish the intended purpose of the use or disclosure.

We are required to follow the privacy practices described in this notice, though we reserve the right to change our privacy practices and the terms of this notice at any time. If we do so, you may request a copy of the new notice from Huron County Health Department, 28 Executive Drive, Norwalk, Ohio 44890 or on our website [www.huroncohealth.com](http://www.huroncohealth.com).

### **II. How we may use and disclose your protected health information.**

We use and disclose PHI for a variety of reasons. We have a limited right to use and/or disclosure your PHI for purposes of treatment, payment or health care operations. For uses beyond that, we must have your written authorization unless the law permits or requires us to make the use or disclosure without your authorization. If we disclose your PHI to an outside entity for that entity to perform a function on our behalf, we must have in place an agreement from the outside entity that it will extend the same degree of privacy protection to your information that we must apply to your PHI. However, the law provides that we are permitted to make some uses/disclosures without your consent or authorization. The following offers more description and some examples of our potential uses/disclosures of PHI.

#### **A. Uses and Disclosures Relating to Treatment, Payment of Health Care Operations.** We may use or disclose your PHI as follows:

- 1. For service:** we may disclose your PHI to doctors, nurses and other health care personnel who are involved in providing services rendered. Your PHI may also be shared with outside



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entities performing ancillary services relating to your treatment, such as lab work, x-rays or for consultation purposes.

**2. To obtain payment:** We may use/disclose your PHI in order to process bills for services rendered.

**3. Appointment reminders:** Unless you provide us with alternative instructions, we may send appointment reminders and other similar materials to your home; leave a message on your answering machine/voice mail or with the individual answering your phone. Our agency phone number may be on your caller ID.

**B. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization:** For uses and disclosures beyond treatment, payment and health care operations we are required to have your written authorization, unless the use or disclosure falls within one of the exceptions described below. Authorizations can be revoked at any time to stop future uses/disclosures except to the extent that we have already undertaken an action in reliance upon your authorization.

**C. Uses and Disclosures of PHI from Huron County Health Department**

**Records Not Requiring Consent of Authorization:** The law provides that we may use/disclose your PHI from our records without consent of authorization in the following circumstances:

**1. When required by law:** we may disclose PHI when a law requires us to do so. We are required to report information about suspected abuse, neglect, domestic violence, relating to suspected criminal activity or in response to court order. We must also disclose PHI to authorities that monitor compliance with these privacy requirements.

**2. For public health activities:** We may disclose PHI when we are required to collect information about disease or injury, or to report vital statistics to public health authority.

**3. For health oversight activities:** We may disclose PHI to our central office, the protection and advocacy agency or another agency responsible for monitoring the health care system for such purposes as reporting of investigation of unusual incidents.

**4. Relating to decedents:** We may disclose PHI relating to an individual's death to coroners, medical examiners or funeral directors and to organ procurement organizations relating to organ, eye or tissue donations or transplants.



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- 5. For research purposes:** In certain circumstances and under supervision of a privacy board, we may disclose PHI to Ohio Department of Health research staff and their designees in order to assist medical research.
  - 6. To avert threat to health or safety:** In order to avoid a serious threat to health or safety, we may disclose PHI as necessary to law enforcement or other persons who can reasonably prevent or lessen the threat of harm.
  - 7. For specific government functions:** We may disclose PHI of military personnel and veterans in certain situations, to correctional facilities in certain situations, to government benefits programs relating to eligibility and enrollment and for national security reasons, such as protection of the President.
- D. Uses and Disclosures Requiring You to have an Opportunity to Object:** In the following situations, we may disclose a limited amount of your PHI if we inform you about the disclosure in advance and you do not object if the disclosure is not otherwise prohibited by law. However, if there is an emergency and you cannot be given your opportunity to object, to further disclosure as soon as you are able to do so.
- 1. To families, friends or other involved in your care:** We may share with these people information directly related to their involvement in your care, or payment for your care. We may also share PHI with these people to notify them about your location, general condition, or death.

### III. Your Rights Regarding Your Protected Health Information:

- A. To request restrictions on uses/disclosures:** You have the right to ask that we limit how we use or disclose your PHI. We will consider your request but are not legally bound to agree to the restriction. To the extent that we do agree to any restrictions on our use/disclosure of your PHI, we will put the agreement in writing and abide by it except in emergency situations. We cannot agree to limit uses/disclosures that are required by law.
- B. To choose how we contact you:** You have the right to ask that we send you information at an alternative address or by an alternative means. We must agree to your request if it is reasonably easy for us to do so.



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- C. To request amendment of your PHI:** Unless your access is restricted for clear and documented treatment reasons, you have a right to see your protected health information upon your written request. We will respond to your request within 60 days. If we deny your access, we will give you written reasons for the denial and explain any right to have the denial reviewed. If you want copies of your PHI, a charge for copying may be imposed, depending on your circumstances. You have a right to choose what portions of your information you want copied and to have prior information on the cost of copying.
- D. To request amendment of your PHI:** If you believe that there is a mistake of missing information in our record of your PHI, you may request, in writing, that we correct or add to the record. We will respond within 60 days of receiving your request. We may deny the request if we determine that PHI is (i) correct and complete; (ii) not created by us and/or not part of our records, or (iii) not permitted to be disclosed. Any denial will state the reasons for denial and explain, along with any statement in response that you provide, appended to your PHI. If we approve the request for amendment, we will change the PHI and so inform you, and tell others that need to know about the change in the PHI.
- E. To find out what disclosures have been made:** You have the right to get a list of when, to whom, for what purpose and what content of your PHI has been released (other than instances of disclosure for treatment, payment and operations) or pursuant to your written authorization. The list also will not include any disclosures made for national security purposes, to law enforcement officials or correctional facilities or disclosures made before April 14, 2003. We will respond to your written request for such a list within 60 days of receiving it. Your request can relate to disclosures going as far back as six years but not earlier than April 14, 2003. There will be no charge for up to one such list each year. There may be a charge for more frequent requests.
- F. To receive this notice:** You have a right to receive a paper copy of notice and/or an electronic copy by email upon request.



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## **IV. Confidentiality and Security**

The Huron County Public Health (HCPH) will safeguard, according to strict standards of security and confidentiality of our client information and records, to protect against anticipated threats or hazards to such records, and to protect against unauthorized access to or use of such information or records. Internally, HCPH limits access to our clients' information to only those employees who need access to the information to perform their job functions. Employees who misuse information are subject to disciplinary actions. Externally, we do not disclose client information to any third parties unless we have previously informed the client of the disclosure, have been authorized to do so by the client, or are required or permitted to make the disclosure by law or our regulators.

## **V. How to Complain about our Privacy Practices**

If you think we may have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we made about your access to your PHI, you may file a complaint with the person listed in Section VI below. You also may file a written complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights. You may call (866)627-7748 to obtain their address. We will take no retaliatory action against you if you make such complaints.

## **VI. Contact Person for Information or to Submit a Complaint**

If you have questions about this notice or any complaints about our privacy practices, please contact: Privacy Officer, HCPH 28 Executive Drive, Norwalk, OH 44857.



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