



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

Effective April 14, 2003

The privacy of your medical information is important to us. You may be aware that U.S. government regulators established privacy rules ("HIPAA") governing protected health information. This notice tells you about how it may be used, and about certain rights that you have.

Use and disclosure of protected information.

Federal law provides that we may use your medical information (protected health information) for treatment of you, without further specific notice to you, or written authorization by you. For example, if we refer you to a specialist, we may provide laboratory or test data to that specialist (subject to more stringent New York laws, such as restriction on disclosure of information concerning HIV/AIDS).

Federal law provides that we may use your medical information to obtain payment for our services without further specific notice to you, or written authorization by you. For example, under your health plan, we are required to provide them with a diagnosis code for your visit and a description of the services rendered.

Federal law provides that we may use your medical information for health care operations without further specific notice to you, or written authorization by you. For example, our accountants may see your name, dates of treatment and procedure codes during audits of our books or we may use your information for financial services, quality assurance, risk reduction and claim management purposes with our medical professional liability insurer.

We may use or disclose your medical information, without further notice to you, or specific authorization by you, where:

- 1. required by law;**
- 2. required for public health purposes;**
- 3. required by law to report child abuse;**
- 4. where required by a health oversight agency for oversight activities authorized by law, such as the Department of Health, Office of Professional Discipline or Office of Professional Medical Conduct**
- 5. required by law in judicial or administrative proceedings;**
- 6. required for law enforcement purposes by a law enforcement official;**
- 7. required by a coroner or medical examiner;**
- 8. permitted by law to a funeral director;**
- 9. permitted by law for organ donation purposes;**
- 10. permitted by law to avert a serious threat to health or safety;**
- 11. permitted by law and required by military authorities if you are a member of the U.S. armed forces**

New York State law provides additional protection for information regarding HIV / AIDS. We will continue to follow New York State law with respect to such information.

We may contact you by mail or phone, at your residence, to remind you of appointments or to provide information about treatment alternatives. Unless you instruct us otherwise, we may leave a message for you on any answering device or with any person who answers the phone at your residence.

You can make reasonable requests, in writing, for us to use alternative methods of communicating with you in a confidential manner.

Other uses or disclosures of your medical information will be made only with your written authorization. You have the right to revoke any written authorization that you give.

Rights that you have.

You have the right to request restrictions on certain of the uses or disclosures described above. Except as stated below, we are not required to agree to such restrictions.

You have the right to inspect and obtain copies of your medical information (a reasonable fee will be charged).

You have the right to request amendments to your medical information. Such requests must be in writing, and must state the reason for the requested amendment. We will notify you as to whether we agree or disagree with the requested amendment. If we disagree with any requested amendment, we will further notify you of your rights.

You have the right to request an accounting of any disclosures we make of your medical information, except for: disclosures we make to you, or to carry out treatment, payment or health care operations, or as requested by your written authorization, or as permitted or required under 45 CFR § 164.502, or for emergency or notification purposes, or for national security or intelligence purposes as permitted by law, or to correctional facilities or law enforcement officials as permitted by law [or for public health purposes after being de-identified or limited to remove personally identifiable information] or disclosures made before April 14, 2003.

You have the right to obtain a paper copy of this notice from our office.

Obligations that we have.

We are required by law to maintain the privacy of protected health information and to provide individuals with notice of our legal duties and privacy practices.

We are required to abide by the terms of this notice as long as it is currently in effect.

We reserve the right to revise this notice, and to make a new notice effective for all protected health information we maintain. Any revised notice will be posted in our office, and copies will be available there.

If you want to complain about violations of your privacy rights, you have the right to file a complaint with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services of the United States. You may also file a complaint with us. Complaints should be directed to our privacy officer

Brenda Stratmann, Practice Administrator is our privacy officer. You can contact her at 361.575.6396 if you desire further information, or have any questions or concerns.

No retaliatory action will be taken against you for any complaint you may make.