

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES (NPP)

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION.

PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

THE PRIVACY OF YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT TO US.

Our Legal Duty

We are required by applicable federal and state law to maintain the privacy of your health information. We are also required to give you this Notice about our privacy practices, our legal duties, and your rights concerning your health information. We must follow the privacy practices that are described in the Notice while it is in effect. This Notice takes effect 01/01/2015, and will remain in effect until we replace it.

We reserve the right to change our privacy practices and the terms of the Notice at any time, provided such changes are permitted by applicable law. We reserve the right to make the changes in our privacy practices and the new terms of our Notice effective for all health information that we maintain, including health information we created or received before we made the changes. Before we make a significant change in our privacy practices, we will change the Notice and make the new Notice available upon request.

You may request a copy of our Notice at any time. For more information about our privacy practices, or for additional copies of this Notice, please contact us using the above address.

Uses and Disclosures of Personally Identifiable Health Information

We will use the information about your health care which we have obtained from you or from others mainly to provide you with **treatment**, to arrange **payment** for our services, and for some other business activities which are called, in the law, health care **operations**. These uses and disclosures are necessary to make sure that all of our clients receive quality care and for our operation and management purposes. For example, your therapist will make sure the office staff knows about your appointment times, and the billing office will send invoice information to your insurance company if you wish them to pay their share of the costs. This may include sharing of data to allow us to statistically evaluate and improve the quality of our services. The entities and individual covered by this Notice also may share information with each other for purposes of our joint health care operations. After you have read this NPP we will ask you to sign an **Acknowledgement Receipt** to let us use and share your information.

Security

It is our responsibility to protect your information via both physical and electronic means. Our electronic health records are kept on our office server and encrypted. However, we do not have the technology to provide the same level of protection for email or texting. We recommend that you be careful not to send us sensitive PHI in these formats and use encryption if it is necessary to email PHI. Telehealth services (ex: video conferencing) also may not have the same level of security and you should be cautious in deciding if you wish to use this modality and what you choose to share.

In order to disclose (release) your information outside our agency, we must have written permission. We will ask you to sign an Authorization form.

There are very few situations where the law allows/requires us to send information without your consent. These are:

1. When there is a serious threat to your health or safety or someone else's. In these situations, we will only share information with a person or organization that is able to help prevent or reduce the threat. For example, we are required to report child abuse or to call the police if someone threatens to harm another person. We would, of course, get help for you if you were suicidal or in a medical emergency.

2. When there is a court order that requires us to release information. This can happen, for example, in a child custody hearing. If we receive a subpoena, we will try to contact you or your attorney to find out how you want us to proceed. Our own attorney will advise us, the judge may have the final decision.

Your Rights Regarding Your Health Information

1. You can ask us to communicate with you about your health and related issues in a particular way or at a certain place which is more private for you. For example, you can ask us to call you at home and not at work to schedule or cancel an appointment. We will try our best to do as you ask.
2. You have the right to ask us to limit what we tell people involved in your care or the payment for your care, such as family members and friends. If you do not use your insurance benefits for payment for services, we do not routinely send information to them.
3. You have the right to look at the health information we have about you such as your medical and billing records. You can get a copy of your records, under some circumstances we may charge you or require identification. Contact our office to arrange to see your records.
4. If you believe your records have incorrect or missing information, you can ask us to make changes to your health information. You have to make a request in writing and send it to our Privacy Officer. You must give us the reason for the change.
5. We do not currently use patient information for fund-raising appeals or sell it. If we ever were to do so, you would be able to choose to opt out of these practices.
6. You have the right to a copy of this notice. If we change this NPP we will post the new version in our waiting area.
7. If there is ever an accidental release of your personal health information (such as a hacker breaking into the system), we will notify you of this as soon as we can.
8. You have the right to file a complaint if you believe your privacy rights have been violated. You can file a complaint with our Privacy Officer and with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. All complaints must be in writing. Filing a complaint will not change the health care we provide to you in any way.

If you have any questions regarding this notice or our health information privacy policies, please contact our Privacy Officer, Kelly Burkhouse, PhD, who can be reached at (716)488-1971.

The effective date of this notice is **January 1, 2015**