

Privacy Practices

UNDERSTANDING YOUR HEALTH RECORD & INFORMATION: Each time you visit a hospital, physician, or other healthcare provider a record of your visit is made. Typically, this record contains your symptoms, examination and test results, diagnoses, treatment, and a plan for future care or treatment. This information, often referred to as your health or medical record, serves as a basis for planning your care and treatment and services as a means of communication among the many health professionals who contribute to your care. Understanding what is in your records and how your information is used helps you ensure its accuracy, better understand who, what, when, where and why others may access your health information, and make more informed decisions when authorizing disclosure to others.

YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION RIGHTS: Unless otherwise required by law, your health record is the physical property of the healthcare practitioner or facility that compiled it; the information belongs to you. You have the right to request a restriction on certain uses and disclosures of your information and request amendments to your health record. This includes the right to obtain a paper copy of the notice of information practices upon request, inspect and obtain a copy of your health record. You may obtain an accounting of disclosures of your health information, request communication of your health information by alternative means or at alternative locations, and revoke your authorization to use or disclosed health information except to the extent that action has already been taken.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES: This organization is required to maintain the privacy of your health information, and provide you with a notice as to our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to information we collect and maintain about you. This organization must abide by the terms of this notice, notify you if we are unable to agree to a requested restriction, and accommodate reasonable requests you may have to communicate health information by alternative means or at alternative locations. We reserve the right to change our practices and to make the new provisions effective for all protected health information we maintain. We will not use or disclose your health information without your authorization, except as described in this notice.

EXAMPLES OF DISCLOSURE FOR TREATMENT, PAYMENT AND HEALTH OPERATIONS

We will use your health information for treatment. For example: information obtained by a healthcare practitioner will be recorded in your record and used to determine the course of treatment that should work best for you. We will also provide your other practitioners with images and reports that should assist them in treating you.

We will use your health information for payment. For example: a bill may be sent to you or a third party payer. The information on or accompanying the bill may include information that identifies you, as well as your diagnosis, procedures and supplies used.

We will use your health information for regular health operations. For example: members of the medical staff, or the risk/quality improvement staff may use information in your health record to assess the care and outcomes in your case and others like it. This information will then be used in an effort to continually improve the quality and effectiveness of the healthcare and service we provide.

Business associates: There may be some services provided in our organization through contracts with business associates. Examples include information technology companies and certain laboratory tests. When these services are contracted, we may disclose some or all of your health information to our business associate so that they can perform the job we have asked them to do. To protect your health information, however, we require the business associate to appropriately safeguard your information.

Marketing: We may contact you to provide appointment reminders or information about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA): As required by law, we may disclose to the FDA health information relative to adverse events with respect to product and product defects, or post marketing surveillance information to enable product recalls, repairs, or replacement.

Workers Compensation: We may disclose health information to the extent authorized by and to the extent necessary to comply with law relating to workers compensation or other similar programs.

Public Health: As required by law, we may disclose your health information to public health or legal authorities charged with tracking birth and deaths as well as preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability.

Correctional institution: Should you be an inmate of a correctional institution, we may disclose to the institution or agents thereof health information necessary for your health and the health and safety of the other individuals. An inmate does not have the right to the Notice of Privacy Practices.

Law Enforcement: We may disclose health information for law enforcement purposes as required by law or in response to a valid subpoena. Federal law makes provision for your health information to be released to an appropriate health oversight agency, public health authority or attorney, provided that a work force member or business associate believes in good faith that we have engaged in unlawful conduct or have otherwise violated professional or clinical standards and are potentially endangering one or more patients; workers or the public.

Notification: We may use or disclose information to notify or assist in notifying a family member, personal representative, or another person responsible for your care, your location and general condition.

Communication with family: Health professionals, using their best judgment, may disclose to a family member, other relatives, close personal friends or any other person you identify, health information relevant to that person's involvement in your care or payment related to your care.

Research: We may disclose information to researchers when an institutional review board, that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your health information, has approved their research.

Maryland Health Information Exchange/CRISP: We have chosen to participate in the Chesapeake Regional Information System for our Patients, Inc. (CRISP), a statewide internet-based health information exchange. As permitted by law, your health information will be shared with this exchange in order to provide faster access, better coordination of care and assist providers and public health officials in making more informed decisions. You may "opt-out" and prevent searching of your health information available through CRISP by calling 1-877-952-7477 or completing and submitting an Opt-Out form to CRISP by mail, fax or through their website at www.crisphealth.org.

Notice of Privacy Practices Available: This notice will be prominently posted in the office where registration occurs and patients will be provided with a hard copy.

This Notice will be effective from April 14, 2003.

Modification & Amendment: This notice may be modified or amended by other documents, upon notification from your healthcare provider.