

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

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

PLEASE REVIEW THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY.
THE PRIVACY OF YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT TO US.

OUR LEGAL DUTY

The Health Insurance and Portability & Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a federal program that requires that all medical and dental records and other individually identifiable health information used or disclosed by us in any form, whether electronically, on paper, or orally, are properly kept confidential. HIPAA gives you, the patient, significant rights to understand and control how your health information is used.

HIPAA provides penalties for covered entities, including our Practice, that misuse "protected health information" (PHI). PHI is information about you, including demographic information, that may identify you and that relates to your past, present, or future physical or mental health or condition and related health care services. We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your PHI and to provide you with this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your PHI. We also have legal obligations to notify you in the event of a breach of unsecured PHI.

This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how we may use and disclose your PHI for treatment, payment, healthcare operations, and for other purposes that are permitted or required by law. It also describes your rights to access and control your PHI. This Notice of Privacy Policies takes effect on 01/20/2026, and remains in effect until we replace it. We are required to abide by the terms of the Notice of Privacy Practices that is in effect. When state law provides greater privacy protections or rights than federal law, we will follow the more stringent state law.

We reserve the right to change our privacy practices and the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices at any time, provided such changes are permitted by applicable law. We reserve the right to make any changes in our privacy practices effective for all PHI that we maintain, including health information we created or received before we made the changes. In the event of a change in our practices, we will provide you with a copy of the revised Notice of Privacy Practices through one or more of the following methods: posting the Notice of Privacy Practices to our website, mailing you a copy, or providing you a copy at your next appointment with us.

You may request a copy of our current Notice of Privacy Practices at any time. For more information about our practices, or for additional copies, please contact us using the information listed at the end of this Notice.

Our practice maintains policies and procedures designed to comply with applicable federal and state privacy laws, including HIPAA and Texas law, and provides required privacy training to members of our workforce.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

We may use and disclose your health information for different purposes, including treatment, payment, and health care operations. For each of these categories, we have provided a description and an example. Certain categories of health information may be considered sensitive personal health information and may be subject to additional protections under Texas law and federal law, including but not limited to information related to mental health, substance use disorder treatment, genetic information, HIV or AIDS, and other information protected by law. We will apply any heightened confidentiality protections required by applicable law. We will abide by these special protections as they pertain to applicable cases involving these types of records. Additionally, certain types of health information, including substance use disorder records, may be subject to stricter privacy protections under federal law and may not be used or disclosed as described above without your written authorization, except as permitted by law.

Treatment: We may use or disclose your PHI to personnel in our office, as well as to physicians and other healthcare professionals within or outside our office, who are involved in your medical care and need the information to provide you with medical care and related services. For example, we may use or disclose your PHI in consultations and/or discussions regarding your medical care and related services with healthcare providers who we refer to and receive referrals from. We require authorization to disclose your PHI to healthcare providers not currently involved in your care.

Payment: We may use and disclose your health information to obtain reimbursement for the treatment and services you receive from us or another entity involved with your care. Payment activities include billing, collections, claims management, and determinations of eligibility and coverage to obtain payment from you, an insurance company, or another third party. For example, we may send claims to your dental health plan containing certain health information.

Healthcare Operations: We may use and disclose your PHI in connection with our healthcare operations. Healthcare operations include quality assessment and improvement activities, reviewing the competence or qualifications of healthcare professionals, evaluating practitioner and provider performance, conducting training programs, accreditation, certification, licensing, and credentialing activities. For example, we may disclose PHI to medical students who are performing work with our office, or call your name in the reception area.

Appointment Reminders and Other Contacts: We may disclose PHI in the course of leaving phone messages and in providing you with appointment reminders via phone messages, postcards, or letters. We also may use and disclose Health Information to tell you about treatment alternatives or health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

Business Associates: We may disclose PHI to our business associates, such as billing services or healthcare professionals

providing services as independent contractors, for the purpose of performing specified functions on our behalf and/or providing us with services. PHI will only be used or disclosed if the information is necessary for such functions or services. All of our business associates are obligated to protect the privacy of PHI and are not allowed to use or disclose any PHI other than as specified in our contract with them.

Your Family, Friends, and Representatives: We may use or disclose PHI to notify or assist in the notification of a family member, domestic partner, close personal friend, your personal representative, an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort, or another person responsible for or involved in your care. If you are present, prior to use or disclosure of PHI we will provide you with an opportunity to object to such uses or disclosures. In the event of your incapacity, your death, or in emergency circumstances, if deemed appropriate based upon our professional judgment, we will disclose PHI that is directly relevant to the person's involvement in your care. We may inform such person(s) of your location, your general condition, or death. We will also use our professional judgment and our experience with common practice to make reasonable inferences of your best interest in allowing a person to obtain prescriptions, medical supplies, x-rays, or other similar forms of PHI on your behalf. We will not disclose PHI to such an individual if doing so would be inconsistent with any of your prior wishes that are known by us.

Public Health Activities: We may disclose your health information for public health activities, including disclosures to:

- Prevent or control disease, injury or disability;
- Report child abuse or neglect;
- Report reactions to medications or problems with products or devices;
- Notify a person of a recall, repair, or replacement of products or devices;
- Notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or condition; or
- Notify the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence.

Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors: We may release your PHI to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death. We may also disclose PHI to funeral directors consistent with applicable law to enable them to carry out their duties.

National Security: We may disclose to military authorities the health information of Armed Forces personnel under certain circumstances. We may disclose to authorized federal officials health information required for lawful intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security activities. We may disclose to correctional institution or law enforcement official having lawful custody the protected health information of an inmate or patient.

Disaster Relief: We may use or disclose your health information to assist in disaster relief efforts.

Secretary of HHS: We will disclose your health information to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services when required to investigate or determine compliance with HIPAA.

Worker's Compensation: We may disclose your PHI to the extent authorized by and to the extent necessary to comply with laws relating to worker's compensation or other similar programs established by law.

Law Enforcement: We may disclose your PHI for law enforcement purposes as permitted by HIPAA, as required by law, or in response to a subpoena or court order.

Health Oversight Activities: We may disclose your PHI to an oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include audits, investigations, inspections, and credentialing, as necessary for licensure and for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights laws.

Judicial and Administrative Proceedings: If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may disclose your PHI in response to a court or administrative order. We may also disclose health information about you in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process instituted by someone else involved in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made, either by the requesting party or us, to tell you about the request or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.

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

Fundraising: We may contact you to provide you with information about our sponsored activities, including fundraising programs, as permitted by applicable law. If you do not wish to receive such information from us, you may opt out of receiving the communications.

Data Breach Notification Purposes: We may use or disclose your PHI to provide legally required notices of unauthorized access to or disclosure of your PHI.

Required by Law: We may use or disclose your PHI when we are required to do so by law. Such circumstances include, but are not limited to, compliance with a court order, mandatory reporting due to serious or imminent threats to the public, mandatory reporting of child abuse or neglect, in response to government agency audits or investigations, and reporting disclosures to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services as necessary for the purpose of investigating or determining our compliance with HIPAA and Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH) rules.

YOU MAY PROVIDE ADDITIONAL AUTHORIZATION

Marketing Uses: We may only use or disclose your PHI for marketing purposes if you authorize us to do so. Such authorization would allow us to disclose PHI to a third-party vendor business associate for the purpose of providing you with communications permitted by law about services or products that may be of interest to you. Your authorization may be revoked in writing at any time. Revocation of authorization will not affect any use or disclosures permitted by your authorization while it was in effect.

Sale: We may only use or disclose your PHI in a manner that constitutes a sale of information if you authorize us to do so. Your authorization may be revoked in writing at any time. Revocation of authorization will not affect any use or disclosures permitted by your authorization while it was in effect.

To Others Upon Your Specific Authorization: In addition to our use of PHI as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices, you may give us written authorization to use your PHI or to disclose it to anyone for any purpose. If you give us an authorization, you may revoke it in writing at any time. Your revocation will not affect any use or disclosures permitted by your authorization while it was in effect. If the Practice maintains any psychotherapy notes, they will not be released unless you sign an authorization or if otherwise required by law. Consistent with the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), our Practice will not use or disclose your genetic information to insurance providers or others for underwriting purposes.

SPECIAL PRIVACY PROTECTIONS FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER RECORDS

In limited circumstances, our dental practice may receive health information related to substance use disorder treatment. Certain substance use disorder records are subject to additional federal confidentiality protections under 42 C.F.R Part 2, which provide greater privacy protections than the general HIPAA Privacy Rule.

When information is protected by these federal regulations:

- We may not use or disclose this information for treatment, payment, or health care operations without your specific written authorization, unless otherwise permitted or required by law.
- This information cannot be disclosed in civil, criminal, administrative, or legislative proceedings without appropriate authorization or a court order.
- Any disclosure made with your authorization must include a notice that redisclosure is prohibited unless permitted by law.

We apply these heightened protections only when required by law and only to information that qualifies as substance use disorder records under applicable federal regulations.

PATIENT RIGHTS

Access: You have the right to look at or get copies of your health information, with limited exceptions. You must make the request in writing. You may obtain a form to request access by using the contact information listed at the end of this Notice. You may also request access by sending us a letter to the address at the end of this Notice. If you request information that we maintain on paper, we may provide photocopies. If you request information that we maintain electronically, you have the right to an electronic copy. We will use the form and format you request if readily producible. We will charge you a reasonable cost-based fee for the cost of supplies and labor of copying, and for postage if you want copies mailed to you. Contact us using the information listed at the end of this Notice for an explanation of our fee structure. If you are denied a request for access, you have the right to have the denial reviewed in accordance with the requirements of applicable law. We will respond to access requests within the timeframes required by applicable federal and state law.

Notification of a Breach: We will notify you of a breach of your unsecured PHI, as required by HIPAA and the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH).

Disclosure Accounting: With the exception of certain disclosures, you have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of your health information in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. This right includes disclosures required to be accounted for under applicable federal and Texas law. To request an accounting of disclosures of your health information, you must submit your request in writing to the Privacy Official. If you request this accounting more than once in a 12-month period, we may charge you a reasonable, cost-based fee for responding to the additional requests.

Right to Request a Restriction: You have the right to request additional restrictions on our use or disclosure of your PHI by submitting a written request to the Privacy Official. Your written request must include (1) what information you want to limit, (2) whether you want to limit our use, disclosure or both, and (3) to whom you want the limits to apply. We are not required to agree to your request except in the case where the disclosure is to a health plan for purposes of carrying out payment or health care operations, and the information pertains solely to a health care item or service for which you, or a person on your behalf (other than the health plan), has paid our practice in full.

Alternative Communication: You have the right to request that we communicate with you about your health information by

alternative means or at alternative locations. You must make your request in writing. Your request must specify the alternative means or location, and provide satisfactory explanation of how payments will be handled under the alternative means or location you request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. However, if we are unable to contact you using the ways or locations you have requested, we may contact you using the information we have.

Amendment: You have the right to request that we amend your health information. Your request must be in writing, and it must explain why the information should be amended. We may deny your request under certain circumstances. If we agree to your request, we will amend your record(s) and notify you of such. If we deny your request for an amendment, we will provide you with a written explanation of why we denied it and explain your rights.

Electronic Notice: You may receive a paper copy of this Notice upon request, even if you have agreed to receive this Notice electronically on our Web site or by electronic mail (e-mail).

Additional Rights for Certain Records: If we receive health information that is protected by additional federal confidentiality laws, you may have additional rights regarding how that information is used and disclosed. These rights will be honored in accordance with applicable law.

QUESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

If you want more information about our privacy practices or have questions or concerns, please contact us.

If you are concerned that we may have violated your privacy rights, or if you disagree with a decision we made about access to your health information or in response to a request you made to amend or restrict the use or disclosure of your health information or to have us communicate with you by alternative means or at alternative locations, you may complain to us using the contact information listed at the end of this Notice. You also may submit a written complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. We will provide you with the address to file your complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services upon request. We support your right to the privacy of your health information. We will not retaliate or take any adverse action against you for exercising your privacy rights or for filing a complaint.

The privacy practices described are currently in effect. We reserve the right to change our privacy practices, and the terms of this Notice at any time, provided such changes are permitted by law. If changes are made, a new Notice of Privacy policy will be displayed in our office and provided to patients. You may request a copy of our Notice at any time. Additional information may be obtained from the HIPAA Coordinator listed in our written HIPAA plan.

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