

NOTICE OF PRIVACY POLICY

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, as a means of communication among the many health professionals who contribute to your care, as a legal document describing the care you received, as a means by which you or a third-party payer can verify that services billed were actually provided, as a tool in educating health professionals, as a source of data for medical research, as a source of information for public health officials charged with improving the health of the nation, as a source of data for facility planning and marketing, as a tool with which we can assess and continually work to improve the care we render and the outcomes we achieve. Understanding what is in your record and how your health information is used ensures its accuracy, helps us better understand who, what, when, where and why others may access your health information, and helps us make more informed decisions when authorizing disclosure to others.

YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION RIGHTS:

Although 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. 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, obtain an accounting of disclosures of your health information, request communications of your health information by alternative means or at alternative locations, and revoke your authorization to use or disclose 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, provide you with a notice as to our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to information we collect and maintain about you, abide by the terms of this notice, notify you if we are unable to agree to a requested restriction, 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. Should our information practices change, we will mail a revised notice to the address you've supplied us with. We will not use or disclose your health information without your authorization, except as described in this notice.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REPORT A PROBLEM:

If you have questions and would like additional information, you may contact the privacy officer at 910-897-7711. If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you can file a complaint with the privacy officer or with the secretary of Health and Human Services. There will be no retaliation for filing a complaint.

EXAMPLES OF DISCLOSURE FOR TREATMENT, PAYMENT AND HEALTH OPERATIONS:

We will use your health information for treatment. For example: Information obtained by a nurse, physician, or other member of your healthcare team will be recorded in your record and used to determine the course of treatment that should work best for you. Your physician will document in your record his or her expectations of the members of your healthcare team. Members of your healthcare team will then record the actions they took and their observations. In that way, the physician will know how you are responding to a treatment. We will also provide your physician or a subsequent healthcare provider with copies of various reports that should assist him or her in treating you once you are discharged from this hospital.

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, the risk or quality improvement manager, or members of the quality improvement team 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 are some services provided in our organization through contacts with business associates. Examples include physician services in the emergency department and radiology, certain laboratory tests, and a copy service we use when making copies of your health record. When these services are contracted, we may disclose your health information to our business associate so that they can perform the job we have asked them to do and bill you or your third-party payer for services rendered. To protect your health information, however, we require the business associate to appropriately safeguard your information.

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

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

Organ procurement organizations: Consistent with applicable law, we may disclose health information to organ procurement organizations or other entities engaged in the procurement, banking or transplantation of organs for the purpose of tissue donation and transplant.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA): We may disclose to the FDA health information relative to adverse events with respect to food, supplements, product and product defects, or post-marketing surveillance information to enable product recalls, repair or replacement.

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

Public health: As required by law, we may disclose your health information to public health or legal authorities charged with preventing and 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, information necessary for your health and the health and safety of other individuals.

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.

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 1, 2005