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NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES FOR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

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.

Notice of Privacy Practices

Privacy is a very important concern for all those who come to this office. It is also complicated because of federal and state laws and our professional rules. Because the rules and laws are so complex some parts of this Notice are quite detailed and you probably will have to read them several times to understand them. If you have any questions, I will be happy to help you.

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A. Introduction – To my clients

This notice will tell you about how I handle information about you. It tells how I use this information here in this office, how I share it with other professionals and organizations, and how you can see it. I want you to know all of this so that you can make the best decisions for yourself and your family. I am also required to tell you about this because of the privacy regulations of a federal law, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). Because this law and the laws of this state are very complicated and I don't want to make you read a lot that may not apply to you, I have simplified some parts. If you have any questions or want to know more about anything in this Notice, please ask me.

B. What is meant by your medical information

Each time you visit me or any doctor's office, hospital, clinic or any other "healthcare provider", information is collected about you and your physical and mental health. It may be information about your past, present or future health or conditions, or the treatment or other services you get from me or from others, or about payment for healthcare. The information I collect from you is called, in the law, PHI which stands for **Protected Health Information**. This information goes into your **medical or healthcare record** or file at the office. In this office this PHI is likely to include these kinds of information:

- Your history. As a child, in school and at work and marital and personal history.
- Reasons you came for treatment. Your problems, complaints, symptoms, needs, goals.
- Diagnoses. Diagnoses are the medical terms for your problems or symptoms.
- A treatment plan. These are the treatments and other services which I think will best help you.
- Progress notes. Each time you come in I write down some things about how you are doing, what I observe about you and what you tell me.
- Records I get from others who have treated or evaluated you.
- Psychological test scores, school records, etc.
- Information about medications you took or are taking
- Legal matters
- Billing and insurance information.

This list is just to give you an idea there may be other kinds of information that go into your healthcare record here.

I use this information for many purposes. For example, I may use it:

- To plan your care and treatment
- To decide how well my treatments are working for you.
- When I talk with other healthcare professionals who are also treating you such as your family doctor or the professional who referred you to me.
- To show that you actually received the services from me which I billed to you or to your health insurance company.
- For teaching and training other healthcare professionals.

- For public health officials trying to improve health are in this country
- To improve the way I do my job by measuring the results of our work.

When you understand what is in your record and what it is used for, you can make better decisions about whom, when and why others should have this information.

Although your health record is the physical property of the healthcare practitioner or facility that collects it, the information belongs to you. You can inspect, read or review it. If you want a copy I can make one for you but may charge you for the costs of copying (and mailing if you want it mailed to you). In some very unusual situations you cannot see all of what is in your records. If you find anything in your records that you think is incorrect or something important is missing, you can ask me to amend (add information to) your record, although in some rare situations I don't have to agree to do that.

C. Privacy and the laws

The HIPAA law requires me to keep your PHI private and to give you this notice of my legal duties and my privacy practices which is called the **Notice of Privacy Practices** or NPP. I will obey the rules of this notice as long as it is in effect but if I change it the rules of the new NPP will apply to all the PHI I keep. If I change the NPP, I will post the new Notice in my office where everyone can see. You can also get a copy from me.

E, How your protected health information can be used and shared

When your information is read by me in this office that is called, in the law "**use.**" If the information is shared with or sent to others outside this office, that is called, in the law, "**disclosure.**" Except in some special circumstances, when I use your PHI here or disclose it to others, I share only the **minimum necessary** PHI needed for the purpose. The law gives you rights to know about your PHI, how it is used and to have a say in how it is disclosed and so I will tell you more about what I do with your information.

1. Uses and disclosures of PHI in healthcare *with* your consent

After you have read this Notice you will be asked to sign a separate **Consent form** to allow me to use and share your PHI. In almost all cases, I intend to use your PHI here or share your PHI with other people or organizations to provide **treatment** to you, arrange for **payment** for my services, or some other business functions called health care **operations**. Together these routine purposes are called TPO and the Consent form allows me to use and disclose your PHI for TPO.

1a. For treatment, payment or health care operations

I need information about you and your condition to provide care to you. You have to agree to let me collect the information and to use it and share it as necessary to care for you properly. Therefore, you must sign the Consent form before I begin to treat you because if you do not agree and consent, I cannot treat you.

When you come to see me, I may collect information about you and all of it may go into your healthcare records here. Generally, I may use or disclose your PHI for three

purposes: treatment, obtaining payment, and what are called healthcare operations. Let's see what these are about.

For treatment

I use your medical information to provide you with psychological treatment or services. These might include individual, family or group therapy, psychological, educational or vocational testing, treatment planning, or measuring the effects of my services.

I may share or disclose your PHI to others who provide treatment to you. I am likely to share your information with your personal physician. If you are being treated by a team, I can share some of your PHI with them so that the services you receive will be coordinated. They will also enter their findings, the actions they took, and their plans into your record so we all can decide what treatments work best for you and make up a Treatment Plan. I may refer you to other professional consultants for services I cannot offer such as special testing or treatments. When I do this I need to tell them some things about you and your conditions. I will get back their findings and opinions and those will go into your records here. If you receive treatment in the future from other professionals, I can also share your PHI with them. These are some examples so that you can see how I use and disclose your PHI for treatment.

For Payment

I may use your information to bill you, your insurance or others to be paid for the treatment I provide to you. I may contact your insurance company to check on exactly what your insurance covers. I may have to tell them your diagnoses, what treatments you have received and what I expect as I treat you. I will need to tell them about when we met, your progress and other similar things.

For health care operations

There are some other ways I may use or disclose your PHI which are called health care operations. For example, I may use your PHI to see where I can make improvements in the care and services I provide. I may be required to supply some information to some government health agencies so they can study disorders and treatment and make plans for services that are needed. If I do, your name and identity will be removed from what I send.

1b. Other uses in healthcare

Appointment Reminders. I may use and disclose medical information to reschedule or remind you of appointments for treatment or other care. If you want me to call or write to you only at your home or your work or prefer some other way to reach you, I usually can arrange that. Just tell me.

Treatment Alternatives: I may use and disclose your PHI to tell you about or recommend possible treatments or alternatives that may be of interest to you.

Other Benefits and Services. I may use and disclose your PHI to tell you about health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

Research. I may use or share your information to do research to improve treatments. For example, comparing two treatments for the same disorder to see which works better or faster or costs less. In all cases, your name, address and other information that reveals who you are will be removed from the information given to researchers. If they need to know who you are, I will discuss the research project with you and you will have to sign a special Authorization form before any information is shared.

Business Associates. There are some jobs I might hire other businesses to do for me. They are called our Business Associates in the law. These business associates may need to receive some of your PHI to do their jobs properly. To protect your privacy, they will agree in their contract with me to safeguard your information.

2. Uses and disclosures requiring your Authorization

If I want to use your information for any purpose besides the TPO or those I described above, I will need your permission on an **Authorization Form**. I don't expect to need this very often.

If you do authorize me to use or disclose your PHI, you can revoke (cancel) that permission, in writing, at any time. After that time, I will not use or disclose your information for the purposes that I agreed to. Of course, I cannot take back any information I had already disclosed with your permission or that I had used in our office.

3. Uses and disclosures of PHI from mental health records Not requiring Consent or Authorization

The laws let me use and disclose some of your PHI without your consent or authorization in some cases.

When required by law

There are some federal, state or local laws which require me to disclose PHI.

- I have to report suspected child abuse.
- If you are involved in a lawsuit or legal proceeding and I receive a subpoena, discovery request or other lawful process, I may have to release some of your PHI. I will only do so after trying to tell you about the request, consulting your lawyer or trying to get a court order to protect the information they requested.
- I have to release (disclose) some information to the government agencies which check on me to see that I am obeying privacy laws.

For Law Enforcement Purposes

I may release medical information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official to investigate a crime or criminal.

For specific government functions

I may disclose PHI of military personnel and veterans to government benefit programs relating to eligibility and enrollment, to Workers' Compensation programs, to correctional facilities if you are an inmate, and for national security reasons.

To Prevent a Serious Threat to Health or Safety

If I come to believe that there is a serious threat to your health or safety or that of another person or the public, I can disclose some of your PHI. I will only do this to persons who can prevent the danger.

4. Uses and disclosures requiring you to have an opportunity to object

I can share some information about you with your family or close others. I will only share information with those involved in your care and anyone else you choose such as close friends or clergy. I will ask you about who you want me to tell what information about your condition or treatment. You can tell me what you want and I will honor your wishes as long as it is not against the law.

If it is an emergency – so I cannot ask if you disagree – I can share information if I believe that it is what you would have wanted and if I believe it will help you if I do share it. If I do share information in an emergency, I will tell you as soon as I can. If you don't approve, I will stop as long as it is not against the law.

4. An accounting of disclosure

When I disclose your PHI, I keep some records of whom I sent it to, when I sent it and what I sent. You can get an accounting (a list) of many of these disclosures.

E. If you have questions or problems

If you need more information or have questions about the privacy practices described above, please speak to me. If you have a problem with how your PHI has been handled or if you believe your privacy rights have been violated, contact me. You have the right to file a complaint with me and with the Secretary of the Federal Department of Health and Human Services. I promise that I will not in any way limit your care here or take any actions against you if you complain.

The effective date of this notice is April 14, 2003.

