

This notice describes how information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review it carefully.

If you have any questions about this Notice please contact our Privacy Officer.

This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how we may use and disclose your protected health information to carry out treatment, payment or health care operations and for other purposes that are permitted or required by law. It also describes your rights to access and control your protected health information. "Protected Health Information" (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 to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices. We may change the terms of our notice, at any time. The new notice will be effective for all protected health information that we maintain at that time. Upon your request, we will provide you with any revised Notice of Privacy Practices by accessing our website, calling the office and requesting that a revised copy be sent to you in the mail or asking for one at the time of your next appointment.

1. Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information(PHI)

Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information Based Upon Your Written Consent

You will be asked by your psychiatrist or psychologist (hereafter "doctor") to sign a consent form. Once you have consented to use and disclosure of your protected health information for treatment, payment and health care operations by signing the consent form, your doctor may use or disclose your protected health information as described in this Section 1. Your protected health information may be used and disclosed by your doctor, our office staff and others outside of our office that are involved in your care and for the purpose of providing services to you. Your protected health information may also be used and disclosed to assist in the reimbursement to you of any possible insurance benefits and to support the operation of the doctor's practice.

Following are examples of the types of uses and disclosures of your protected health care information that the doctor's office is permitted to make once you have signed our consent form. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive, but to describe the types of uses and disclosures that may be made by our office once you have provided consent.

Treatment: We will use and disclose your protected health information to provide, coordinate, or manage your care and any related services. This includes the coordination or management of your health care with a third party that has already obtained your permission to have access to your protected health information. For example, we would disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to an agency that provides care to you.

We will also disclose protected health information to other providers who may be treating you when we have the necessary permission from you to disclose your protected health information. For example, your protected health information may be provided to another specialist to whom you have been referred to ensure that the professional has the necessary information to treat you.

In addition, we may disclose your protected health information from time to time to another doctor or health care provider (*e.g.*, a specialist or laboratory) who, at the request of your doctor, becomes involved in your care by providing assistance with your diagnosis or treatment to your doctor.

Payment: Your protected health information will be used, as needed, to process payment for your services and reimbursement back to you. This may include certain activities that your health insurance plan may undertake before it approves or pays for the health care services we recommend for you such as making a determination of eligibility or coverage for insurance benefits, reviewing services provided to you for medical necessity, and undertaking utilization review activities. For example, obtaining approval for an evaluation may require that your relevant protected health information be disclosed to the health plan to obtain approval for the evaluation.

Assessment and Business Operations: We may use or disclose, as needed, your protected health information in order to support the business activities of your doctor's practice. These activities include, but are not limited to, quality assessment activities, employee review activities, training of doctoral students, and conducting or arranging for other business activities.

For example, we may disclose your protected health information to Ph.D. or Masters students who see clients/patients at our office. In addition, we may use a sign-in sheet at the registration desk where you will be asked to sign your name and indicate your doctor. We may also call you by name in the waiting room when your doctor is ready to see you.

We may use or disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to contact you to remind you of your appointment.

We will share your protected health information with third party "business associates" that perform various activities (*e.g.*, billing, accounting) for the practice. Whenever an arrangement between our office and a business associate involves the use or disclosure of your protected health information, we will have a written contract that contains terms that will protect the privacy of your protected health information.

We may use or disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to provide you with information about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you. We may also use and disclose your protected health information for other marketing activities. For example, your name and address may be used to send you a newsletter about our practice

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and the services we offer. We may also send you information about products or services that we believe may be beneficial to you. You may contact our Privacy Officer to request that these materials not be sent to you.

Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information Based upon Your Written Authorization

Other uses and disclosures of your protected health information will be made only with your written authorization, unless otherwise permitted or required by law as described below. You may revoke this authorization, at any time, in writing, except to the extent that your doctor or the doctor's practice has taken an action in reliance on the use or disclosure indicated in the authorization.

Other Permitted and Required Uses and Disclosures That May Be Made With Your Consent, Authorization or Opportunity to Object

We may use and disclose your protected health information in the following instances. You have the opportunity to agree or object to the use or disclosure of all or part of your protected health information. If you are not present or able to agree or object to the use or disclosure of the protected health information, then your doctor may, using professional judgment, determine whether the disclosure is in your best interest. In this case, only the protected health information that is relevant to your health care will be disclosed.

Others Involved in Your Care: Unless you object, we may disclose to a member of your family, a relative, a close friend or any other person you identify, your protected health information that directly relates to that person's involvement in your care. If you are unable to agree or object to such a disclosure, we may disclose such information as necessary if we determine that it is in your best interest based on our professional judgment.

Communication Barriers: We may use and disclose your protected health information if your doctor or another doctor in the practice attempts to obtain consent from you but is unable to do so due to substantial communication barriers and the doctor determines, using professional judgment, that you intend to consent to use or disclosure under the circumstances.

Other Permitted and Required Uses and Disclosures That May Be Made Without Your Consent, Authorization or Opportunity to Object

We may use or disclose your protected health information in the following situations without your consent or authorization. These situations include:

Required By Law: We may use or disclose your protected health information to the extent that the use or disclosure is required by law. The use or disclosure will be made in compliance with the law and will be limited to the relevant requirements of the law. You will be notified, as required by law, of any such uses or disclosures.

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Health Oversight: We may disclose protected health information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as audits, investigations, and inspections. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies that oversee the health care system, government benefit programs, other government regulatory programs and civil rights laws.

Abuse or Neglect: We may disclose your protected health information to a public health authority that is authorized by law to receive reports of child abuse or neglect. In addition, we may disclose your protected health information if we believe that you have been a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence to the governmental entity or agency authorized to receive such information. In this case, the disclosure will be made consistent with the requirements of applicable federal and state laws.

Legal Proceedings: We may disclose protected health information in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding, in response to an order of a court or administrative tribunal (to the extent such disclosure is expressly authorized), in certain conditions in response to a subpoena, discovery request or other lawful process.

Law Enforcement: We may also disclose protected health information, so long as applicable legal requirements are met, for law enforcement purposes. These law enforcement purposes include (1) legal processes and otherwise required by law, (2) limited information requests for identification and location purposes, (3) pertaining to victims of a crime, (4) suspicion that death has occurred as a result of criminal conduct, (5) in the event that a crime occurs on the premises of the practice, and (6) medical emergency (not on the Practice's premises) and it is likely that a crime has occurred.

Criminal Activity: Consistent with applicable federal and state laws, we may disclose your protected health information, if we believe that the use or disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public. We may also disclose protected health information if it is necessary for law enforcement authorities to identify or apprehend an individual.

Workers' Compensation: Your protected health information may be disclosed by us as authorized to comply with workers' compensation laws and other similar legally-established programs.

2. Your Rights

Following is a statement of your rights with respect to your protected health information and a brief description of how you may exercise these rights.

You have the right to request in writing to inspect and copy your protected health information. This means you may inspect and obtain a copy of protected health information about you that is contained in a designated record set for as long as we maintain the protected health information. A "designated

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record set" contains medical and billing records and any other records that your doctor and the practice uses for making decisions about you.

Under federal law, however, you may not inspect or copy the following records: psychotherapy notes, information compiled in reasonable anticipation of, or use in, a civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceeding, and protected health information that is subject to law that prohibits access to protected health information. Depending on the circumstances, a decision to deny access may be reviewable. In some circumstances, you may have a right to have this decision reviewed. Please contact our Privacy Officer if you have questions about access to your record.

You have the right to request in writing a restriction of your protected health information. This means you may ask us not to use or disclose any part of your protected health information for the purposes of treatment, payment or healthcare operations. You may also request that any part of your protected health information not be disclosed to family members or friends who may be involved in your care or for notification purposes as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices. Your request must state the specific restriction requested and to whom you want the restriction to apply.

Your doctor is not required to agree to a restriction that you may request. If the doctor believes it is in your best interest to permit use and disclosure of your protected health information, your protected health information will not be restricted. If your doctor does agree to the requested restriction, we may not use or disclose your protected health information in violation of that restriction unless it is needed to provide emergency treatment. With this in mind, please discuss any restriction you wish to request with your doctor. You may request a restriction by requesting the Form "Restriction of Use".

You have the right to request in writing to receive confidential communications from us by alternative means or at an alternative location. We will accommodate reasonable requests. We may also condition this accommodation by asking you for information as to how payment will be handled or specification of an alternative address or other method of contact. We will not request an explanation from you as to the basis for the request. Please make this request in writing to our Privacy Officer.

You may have the right to have your doctor amend your protected health information. This means you may request in writing an amendment of protected health information about you in a designated record set for as long as we maintain this information. In certain cases, we may deny your request for an amendment. If we deny your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us and we may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and will provide you with a copy of any such rebuttal. Please contact our Privacy Officer to determine if you have questions about amending your record.

You have the right to receive an accounting of certain disclosures we have made, if any, of your protected health information. This right applies to disclosures for purposes other than treatment, payment or healthcare operations as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices. The right to receive

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this information is subject to certain exceptions, restrictions and limitations.

3. Complaints

You may complain to us or to the Secretary of Health and Human Services by writing to Office for Civil Rights, 1301 Young Street, Suite 1169 Dallas, TX 75202 or calling (214) 767-4056 if you believe your privacy rights have been violated by us. You may also file a written complaint with us by notifying our Privacy Officer of your complaint by writing to PPS, 3730 Kirby Drive, Suite 800 Houston, TX 77098. We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

You may contact our Privacy Officer at (713) 521-7575 for further information about the complaint process.