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## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

As required by the Privacy Regulation created as a result of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA).

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU (AS A PATIENT OF THE PRACTICE) MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED, AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION.

PLEASE REVIEW THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY.

**If you have any questions about this notice please ask a staff member.**

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" 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. Our practice is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your protected health information.

We are required to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices. We may revise or amend the terms of our notice, at any time. The new notice will be effective for all protected health information that we have at that time and for future information. We will post our current Notice in our office in a visible location at all times and upon your request, we will provide you with any revised Notice.

### DISCLOSURES

#### **1. Uses and Disclosures to carry out treatment, payment or health care operations:**

Under HIPAA regulations, we do not need to obtain permission to use health information for treatment, payment and health care operations. However, several Vermont state laws require patient consent before health information is used or disclosed by health care providers.

#### **We may use and disclose your Protected Health Information for the following reasons:**

**Treatment:** We will use and disclose your protected health information to provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and any related services. This includes the coordination or management of your health care with a third party.

For example, we may ask you to have laboratory tests (such as blood or urine tests), and we may use the results to help us reach a diagnosis. We might use your protected health information in order to write a prescription for you, or we might disclose your protected health information to a pharmacy when we order a prescription for you. Many of the people who work for our practice including, but not limited to, our doctors and nurses may use or disclose your protected health information in order to treat you or to assist others in your treatment. Additionally, we may disclose your protected health information to others who

may assist in your care, such as your spouse or children. Finally, we may also disclose your protected health information to other health care providers for purposes related to your treatment.

**Payment:** Your protected health information will be used, as needed, to obtain payment for your health care services. 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 a hospital stay may require that your relevant protected health information be disclosed to the health plan to obtain approval for the hospital admission.

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

For example, we may disclose your protected health information to medical school students that see 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 physician. We may also call you by name in the waiting room when your physician is ready to see you.

We will share your protected health information with third party "business associates" that perform various activities (e.g. billing, transcription services) for the practice. Whenever an arrangement between our office and 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.

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

**Treatment Options and Services:** 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. However, we will get a written authorization from you for further marketing purposes.

#### **1. Uses and disclosures that you can agree or object to.**

We may use and disclose your protected health information in the following instances, which you have the opportunity to object to.

**Others involved in your healthcare:** 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 health 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 judgement. We may use or disclose protected health information to notify or assist in notifying a family member, personal representative or any other person that is responsible for your care of your location, general condition or death. Finally, we may use or disclose your protected health information to an authorized public or private entity to assist in disaster relief efforts and to coordinate uses and disclosures to family or other individuals involved in your health care.

**Emergencies:** We may use or disclose your protected health information in an emergency treatment situation. If this happens, your physician shall allow you to object to future disclosures as soon as reasonably practicable after the delivery of treatment.

### **3. Uses and disclosures that we will obtain your written authorization for.**

**Psychotherapy Notes:** We will obtain your written consent to disclose your psychotherapy notes.

**Marketing:** For all marketing purposes we will obtain your written consent; exceptions include if the product or service is directly treatment related, discussed face to face or given as a promotional gift of nominal value.

### **4. Uses and disclosures for which an authorization or opportunity to agree or object to is not required.**

We may use or disclose your protected health information in the following situations:

**Required by Law:** We may use or disclose your protected health information to the extent that law requires the use or disclosure. 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.

**Public Health:** We may disclose your protected health information for public health activities and purposes to a public health authority that is required or permitted by law to receive the information. The disclosure will be made for the purpose of controlling or reporting disease, injury or disability. We may also disclose your protected health information, if directed by the public health authority, to a foreign government agency that is collaborating with the public health authority.

**Communicable Diseases:** We may disclose your protected health information, if authorized by law, to a person who may have been exposed to a communicable disease or may otherwise be at risk of contracting or spreading the disease or condition.

**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.

**Food and Drug Administrations:** We may disclose your protected health information to a person or company required by the Food and Drug Administration to report adverse events, product defects or problems, biologic product deviations, track products; to enable product recalls; to make repairs or replacements, or to conduct post marketing surveillance, as required.

**Maintenance of Vital Records:** We may report data such as births and deaths.

**HealthOversight:** 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 benefits programs, other government regulatory programs and civil right 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.

**Coroners, Funeral Directors, and Organ Donation:** We may disclose protected health information to a coroner or medical examiner for identification purposes, determining cause of death or for the coroner or medical examiner to perform other duties authorized by law, in order to permit the funeral director to carry out their duties. We may disclose such information in reasonable anticipation of death. Protected health information may be used and disclosed for cadaveric organ, eye or tissue donation purposes.

**Research:** We may disclose your protected health information to researchers when their research has been approved by an institutional review board that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your protected health information. Otherwise, we will ask for a written authorization from you.

**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.

**Military Activity and National Security:** When the appropriate conditions apply, we may use or disclose protected health information of individuals who are Armed Forces personnel (1) for activities deemed necessary by appropriate military command authorities; (2) for the purpose of a determination by the Department of Veterans Affairs of your eligibility for benefits, or (3) to foreign military authority if you are a member of that foreign military services. We may also disclose your protected health information to authorized federal officials for conducting national security and intelligence activities including for the provision of protective services to the President or others legally authorized.

**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.

**Inmates:** We may use or disclose your protected health information if you are an inmate of a correctional facility and your physician created or received your protected health information in the course of providing care to you.

**Required Uses and Disclosures:** Under the law we must make disclosures to you and when required by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to investigate or determine our compliance with the requirements of Section 164.500

**Disclosures required by Vermont State Law:** Vermont Law requires reporting in the following cases: child abuse; abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable adults; fire arm related injuries; communicable diseases; fetal deaths; cancer; lead poisoning; blood alcohol reporting; duty to warn of harm cases. We will disclose information limited to the relevant requirements of the law.

## **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 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 record set” contains medical and billing records and any other records that your physician and the practice use for making decisions about you. This may not include psychotherapy notes.

You must submit your request in writing to Jaron Winston, M.D., 512-476-3556 in order to inspect and/or obtain a copy of your protected health information. Our practice may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing, labor and supplies associated with your request. Our practice may deny your request to inspect and/or copy in certain limited circumstances; however, you may request a review of our denial. Another licensed health care professional chosen by us will conduct reviews.

Please contact a member of our staff if you have questions about access to your medical record.

**You have the right to request 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 physician is not required to agree to a restriction that you may request. If your physician 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 physician 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 physician. You may request a restriction by written request.

**You have the right to request that our practice communicate with you about your health and related issues in a particular manner or at a certain location.** For instance, you may ask that we contact you at home, rather than work. In order to request a type of confidential communication, you must make a written request to a staff member of this office specifying the requested method of contact, or the location where you wish to be contacted. Our practice will accommodate **reasonable** requests. You do not need to give a reason for your request.

**You may have the right to have your physician amend your protected health information.** This means you may request an amendment of protected health information about you in a designated record set for as long as we maintain this information. In certain cases, for example if we think the information is correct, or was not created by our practice, 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 a member of our staff to determine if you have questions about amending your medical record. To file an amendment, your request must be in writing and must be submitted to a staff member of this office.