

# NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES



**This notice describes how Health Information about you (as a patient) may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to your individually identifiable health information.**

**We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your Protected Health Information, to notify you of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your health information, and to notify affected individuals following a breach of unsecured health information. This Notice summarizes our duties and your rights concerning your information. Our duties and your rights are set forth more fully in 45 CFR Part 164. We are required to abide by the terms of our Notice that is currently in effect.**

This Notice of Privacy Practices describes Springhill Medical Center, and that of any of our or affiliates. All employees, staff, and other personnel will follow the terms of this notice. In addition, these entities, sites, and locations may share medical information with each other for treatment, payment, or health care operation purposes as described in this Notice.

## **A. Our commitment to your privacy:**

Our organization is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your individually identifiable health information (also called protected health information or PHI). In conducting our business, we will create records regarding you and the treatment and services we provide to you. We are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of health information that identifies you. We also are required by law to provide you with this notice of our legal duties and the privacy practices that we maintain in our organization concerning your PHI. By federal and state law, we must follow the terms of the Notice of Privacy Practices that we have in effect at the time.

We realize that these laws are complicated, but we must provide you with the following important information:

- How we may use and disclose your PHI,
- Your Privacy rights in your PHI,
- Our obligations concerning the use and disclosure of your PHI

The terms of this notice apply to all records containing your PHI that are created or retained by our organization. We reserve the right to revise or amend this Notice of Privacy Practices. Any revision or amendment to this notice will be effective for all of your records that our organization has created or maintained in the past, and for any of your records that we may create or maintain in the future. Our organization will post a copy of our current Notice in our offices in a visible location at all times. To receive a copy of the revised Notice, you may contact the Privacy Officer and request that a revised copy be sent to you in the mail or it is also available online at [www.smccare.com](http://www.smccare.com).

## **If you have questions about this Notice, please contact:**

Marilyn Goodwin, Privacy Officer at (318) 539-1015 or by email at [marilyn.goodwin@emailsmc.com](mailto:marilyn.goodwin@emailsmc.com)

## **C. We may use and disclose your PHI in the following ways:**

1. **Treatment.** Our organization may use your PHI to treat you. 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 PHI in order to write a prescription for you, or we might disclose your PHI to a pharmacy when we order a prescription for you. Many of the people who work for our organization – including, but not limited to, our doctors and nurses – may use or disclose your PHI in order to treat you or to assist others in your treatment. Additionally, we may disclose your PHI to others who may assist in your care, such as your spouse, children or parents. Finally, we may also disclose your PHI to other health care providers for purposes related to your treatment.

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2. **Payment.** Our organization may use and disclosure your PHI in order to bill and collect payment for the services and items you may receive from us. For example, we may contact your health insurer to certify that you are eligible for benefits (and for what range of benefits), and we may provide your insurer with details regarding your treatment to determine if your insurer will cover, or pay for, your treatment. We also may use and disclosure your PHI to obtain payment from third parties that may be responsible for such costs, such as family members. Also, we may use your PHI to bill you directly for services and items. We may disclose your PHI to other healthcare providers and entities to assist in their billing and collection efforts.
3. **Healthcare operations.** Our organization may use and disclose your PHI to operate our business. As examples of the ways in which we may use and disclosure your information for our operations, our organization may use your PHI to evaluate the quality of care you received from us, or to conduct cost-management and business planning activities for our organization. We will share your PHI with third party “business associates” that perform various activities (e.g., billing, transcription) for the organization. We may disclose your PHI to other healthcare providers and entities to assist in their health care operations.
4. **Business Associates.** We may contract with individuals or entities known as Business Associates to perform various functions on our behalf or to provide certain types of services. In order to perform these functions or to provide these services. Business Associates will receive, create, maintain and/or transmit PHI about you, but only after they agree in writing with us to implement appropriate safeguards regarding your PHI.
5. **Appointment Reminders.** Our organization may use and disclose your PHI to contact you and remind you of an appointment.
6. **Treatment options.** Our organization may use and disclose your PHI to inform you of potential treatment options or alternatives.
7. **Health-related benefits and services.** Our organization may use and disclose your PHI to inform you of health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.
8. **Release of information to family/friends.** Our organization may release your PHI to a friend or family member that is involved in your care, or who assists in taking care of you. For example, a parent or guardian may ask that a baby sitter take their child to the pediatrician’s office for treatment of a cold. In this example, the baby sitter may have access to this child’s medical information.
9. **Disclosures required by law.** Our organization will use and disclose your PHI when we are required to do so by federal, state or local law.

### D. Use and disclosure of your PHI in certain special circumstances.

The following categories describe unique scenarios in which we may use or disclose your identifiable health information:

1. **Public health risks.** Our organization may disclose your PHI to public health authorities that are authorized by law to collect information for the purpose of:
  - Maintaining vital records, such as births and deaths
  - Reporting child abuse or neglect
  - Preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability
  - Notifying a person regarding potential exposure to a communicable disease
  - Notifying a person regarding a potential risk for spreading or contracting a disease or condition,
  - Reporting reactions to drugs or problems with products or devices

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- Notifying individuals if a product or device they may be using has been recalled.
  - Notifying appropriate government agency(ies) and authority(ies) regarding the potential abuse or neglect of an adult patient (including domestic violence); however, will only disclose this information if the patient agrees or we are required or authorized by law to disclose this information
  - Notifying your employer under limited circumstances related primarily to workplace injury or illness or medical surveillance.
2. **Health oversight activities.** Our organization may disclose your PHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. Oversight activities can include, for example, investigations, inspections, audits, surveys, licensure and disciplinary actions; civil, administrative and criminal procedures or actions; or other activities necessary for the government to monitor government programs, compliance with civil rights laws and health care system in general.
3. **Lawsuits and similar proceedings.** Our organization may use and disclose your PHI in response to a court or administrative order, if you are involved in a lawsuit or similar proceeding. We also may disclose your PHI in response to a discovery request, subpoena or other lawful process by another party involved in the dispute, but only if we have made an effort to inform you of the request or to obtain an order protecting the information the party has requested.
4. **Law Enforcement.** We may release PHI if asked to do so by a law enforcement official:
- Regarding a crime victim in certain situations, if we are unable to obtain the person's agreement
  - Concerning a death we believe has resulted from criminal conduct,
  - Regarding criminal conduct at our offices,
  - In response to a warrant, summons, court order, subpoena or similar legal process.
  - To identify, locate a suspect, material witness, fugitive or missing person,
  - In an emergency, to report a crime (including the location or victim(s) of the crime, or the description, identity or location of the perpetrator).
5. **Deceased Patients.** Our organization may release PHI to a medical examiner or coroner to identify a deceased individual or to identify the cause of death. If necessary, we also may release information in order for funeral directors to perform their jobs.
6. **Organ and tissue donation.** Our organization may release your PHI to organizations that handle organ, eye or tissue procurement or transplantation, including organ donation banks, as necessary to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation if you are an organ donor.
7. **Research.** Our organization may use and disclose your PHI for research purposes in certain limited circumstances. We will obtain your written authorization to use your PHI for research purposes except when an Internal Review Board or Privacy Board has determined that the waiver of your authorization satisfies all of the following conditions:
- (A) The use or disclosure involves no more than a minimal risk to your privacy based on the following: (i) an adequate plan to protect the identifiers from improper use and disclosure; (ii) an adequate plan to destroy the identifiers at the earliest opportunity consistent with the research (unless there is a health or research justification for retaining the identifiers or such retain is otherwise request by law); and (iii) adequate written assurances that the PHI will not be re-used or disclosed to any other person or entity(except as request by law) for authorized oversight of the research study, or for other research for which the use of disclosure would otherwise be permitted.
- (B) The research could not practicably be conducted without the waiver,
- (C) The research could not practicably be conducted without access to and use of the PHI.

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8. **Serious threats to health or safety.** Our organization may use and disclose your PHI when necessary to reduce or prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of another individual or the public. Under these circumstances, we will only make disclosures to a person or organization able to help prevent the threat.
10. **Military.** Our organization may disclose your PHI if you are a member of U.S. or foreign military forces (including veterans) and if request by the appropriate authorities.
11. **National security.** Our organization may disclose your PHI to federal officials for intelligence and national security activities authorized by law. We also may disclose your PHI to federal and national security activities authorized by law. We also may disclose your PHI to federal officials in order to protect the president, other officials or foreign heads of state, or to conduct investigations.
12. **Inmates.** Our organization may disclose your PHI to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials if you are an inmate or under the custody of a law enforcement official. Disclosure for the purposes would be necessary: (a) for the institution to provide healthcare services to you, (b) for the safety and security of the institution, and/or (c) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of other individuals.
13. **Worker's compensation.** Our organization may release your PHI for workers' compensation and similar programs.

### E. Your rights regarding your PHI

You have the following rights regarding the PHI that we maintain about you.

1. **Confidential Communications.** You have the right to request that our organization 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 the Privacy Officer specifying the requested method of contact, or the location where you wish to be contacted. Our organization will accommodate reasonable requests. You do not need to give a reason for your request.
2. **Requesting restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI for treatment, payment or health care operations. Additionally, you have the right to request that we restrict our disclosure of your PHI to only certain individuals involved in your care or the payment for your care, such as family members and friends. We are not required to agree to your request; however, if we do agree, we are bound by our agreement except when otherwise required by law, in emergencies or when the information is necessary to treat you. In order to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI, you must make your request in writing to the Privacy Officer or list on your consent form. Your request must describe in a clear and concise fashion:
  - The information you wish restricted,
  - Whether you are requesting to limit our organization's use, disclosure or both,
  - To whom you want the limits to apply

You may request additional restrictions on the use or disclosure of information for the treatment, payment or healthcare operations. We are not required to agree to the requested restriction except in the limited situation in which you or someone on your behalf pays in full for an item or service, and you request that information concerning such item or service not be disclosed to a health insurer.

3. **Inspection and copies.** You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of the PHI that may be used to make decisions about you, including patient medical records and billing records, but not including psychotherapy notes. You must submit your request in writing to the Privacy Officer in order to inspect and/or obtain a copy of your PHI. Our organization may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing,

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labor and supplies associated with your request. Our organization 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.

4. **Amendment.** You may ask for us to amend your health information if you believe it is incorrect or incomplete, and you may request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for our organization. To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to the Privacy Officer. You must provide use with a reason that supports your request for amendment. Our organization will deny your request if you fail to submit your request (and the reason supporting your request) in writing. Also, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that is in our opinion: (a) accurate and complete; (b) not part of the PHI kept by or for the organization; (c) not part of the PHI which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or (d) not created by our organization, unless the individual or entity that created the information is not available to amend the information.
5. **Accounting of disclosures.** All of our patients have the right to request an “accounting of disclosures.” An “accounting of disclosures” is a list of certain non-routine disclosures our organization has made of your PHI for purposes not related to treatment, payment or operations. Use of your PHI as part of the routine patient care in our organization is not required to be documented—for example, the doctor sharing information with the nurse; or the billing department using your information to file your insurance claim. In order to obtain an accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to the Privacy Officer. All requests for an “accounting of disclosures” must state a time period, which may not be longer than six (6) years from the date of disclosure and may not include dates before April 14, 2003. The first list you request within a 12-month period is free of charge, but our organization may charge you for an additional list within the same 12-month period. Our organization will notify you of the costs involved with additional requests, and you may withdraw your request before you incur any costs.
6. **Right to a paper copy of this notice.** You are entitled to receive a paper copy of our notice of privacy practices. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. To obtain a paper copy of this notice, contact the Privacy Officer or go online at [www.smccare.com](http://www.smccare.com).
7. **Right to file a complaint.** If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our organization or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with our organization, contact the Privacy Officer. All complaints must be submitted in writing. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.
8. **Right to provide an authorization for other uses and disclosures.** Our organization will obtain your written authorization for uses and disclosures that are not identified by this notice or permitted by applicable law. Any authorization you provide to us regarding the use and disclosure of your PHI may be revoked at any time in writing. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your PHI for the reasons described in the authorization.

*Please note: We are required to retain records of your care.*