

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Exhibit 3.a.

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.

This Notice of Privacy Practices (“Notice”) describes how protected health information may be used or disclosed by your group health plan to carry out treatment, payment, health care operations and for other purposes that are permitted or required by law. This Notice also sets out our legal obligations concerning your protected health information and describes your rights to access and control your protected health information.

Protected health information (“PHI”) is individually identifiable health information, including demographic information, collected from you or created or received by a health care provider, a health plan, your employer (when functioning on behalf of the group health plan), or a health care clearinghouse and that relates to: (1) your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition; (2) the provision of health care to you; or (3) the past, present or future payment for the provision of health care to you.

This Notice has been drafted to be consistent with what is known as the “HIPAA Privacy Rule,” and any of the terms not defined in this Notice should have the same meaning as they have in the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

If you have any questions or want additional information about the Notice or the policies and procedures described in the Notice, please contact your Group Health Plan Privacy Officer or Human Resources office.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This Notice becomes effective on April 14, 2004.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your PHI. We are obligated to provide you with a copy of this Notice of our legal duties and of our privacy practices with respect to PHI, and we must abide by the terms of this Notice. We reserve the right to change the provisions of this Notice and make the new provisions effective for all PHI that we maintain. If we make a material change to this Notice, we will mail a revised Notice to the address that we have on record.

When using or disclosing PHI or when requesting PHI from another covered entity, we will make reasonable efforts not to use, disclose or request more than the minimum amount of PHI necessary to accomplish the intended purpose of the use, disclosure or request, taking into consideration practical and technological limitations.

However, the minimum necessary standard will not apply in the following situations:

- disclosures to or requests by a health care provider for treatment;
- uses or disclosures made to the individual;
- disclosures made to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- uses or disclosures that are required by law;
- uses or disclosures that are required for compliance with the HIPAA Privacy Rule; and
- uses or disclosures made pursuant to an authorization.

This Notice does not apply to information that has been de-identified. De-identified information is health information that does not identify an individual and with respect to which there is no reasonable basis to believe that the information can be used to identify an individual. It is not individually identifiable health information.

The following is a description of how we are most likely to use and/or disclose your PHI.

- ***Treatment, Payment and Health Care Operations***

We have the right to use and disclose your PHI for all activities that are included within the definitions of “treatment, payment and health care operations” as described in the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

 - ***Treatment***

We will use or disclose your PHI so that you may seek treatment. Treatment is the provision, coordination or management of health care and related services. It also includes, but is not limited to consultations and referrals between one or more of your providers. For example, we may disclose to a treating specialist the name of your primary care physician so that the specialist may request medical records from your primary care physician.
 - ***Payment***

We will use or disclose your PHI to pay claims for services provided to you and to obtain stop-loss reimbursements, if applicable, or to otherwise fulfill our responsibilities for coverage and providing benefits. For example, we may disclose your PHI when a provider requests information regarding your eligibility for coverage under our health plan, or we may use your information to determine if a treatment that you received was medically necessary.
 - ***Health Care Operations***

We will use or disclose your PHI to support our business functions. These functions include, but are not limited to quality assessment and improvement, reviewing provider performance, licensing, stop-loss underwriting, business planning and business development. For example, we may use or disclose your PHI: (1) to provide you with information about one of our disease management programs; (2) to respond to a customer service inquiry from you or (3) in connection with fraud and abuse detection and compliance programs.
- ***Business Associates***

We contract with individuals and entities (Business Associates) to perform various functions on our behalf or to provide certain types of services. To perform these functions or to provide the services, our Business Associates will receive, create, maintain, use or disclose PHI, but only after we require the Business Associates to agree in writing to contract terms designed to appropriately safeguard your information. For example, we may disclose your PHI to a Business Associate to administer claims or to provide service support, utilization management, subrogation or pharmacy benefit management. Examples of our Business Associates would be our third party administrator, broker, preferred provider organization and utilization review vendor.
- ***Other Covered Entities***

We may use or disclose your PHI to assist health care providers in connection with their treatment or payment activities or to assist other covered entities in connection with payment activities and certain health care operations. For example, we may disclose your PHI to a health care provider when needed by the provider to render treatment to you, and we may disclose PHI to another covered entity to conduct health care operations in the areas of fraud and abuse detection or compliance, quality assurance and improvement activities or accreditation, certification, licensing or credentialing. This also means that we may disclose or share your PHI with other insurance carriers in order to coordinate benefits, if you or your family members have coverage through another carrier.
- ***Plan Sponsor***

We may disclose your PHI to the plan sponsor of the group health plan for purposes of plan administration or pursuant to an authorization request signed by you. Also, we may use or disclose “summary health information” to the plan sponsor for obtaining premium bids or modifying, amending or terminating the group health plan. Summary health information summarizes the claims history, claims expenses or types of claims experienced by individuals for

whom a plan sponsor has provided health benefits under a group health plan and from which Exhibit 3.a. identifying information has been deleted in accordance with the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

Potential Impact of State Law

The HIPAA Privacy Regulations generally do not “preempt” (or take precedence over) state privacy or other applicable laws that provide individuals greater privacy protections. As a result, to the extent state law applies, the privacy laws of a particular state, or other federal laws, rather than the HIPAA Privacy Regulations, might impose a privacy standard under which we will be required to operate. For example, where such laws have been enacted, we will follow more stringent state privacy laws that relate to uses and disclosures of PHI concerning HIV or AIDS, mental health, substance abuse/chemical dependency, genetic testing, reproductive rights, etc.

Other Possible Uses and Disclosures of PHI

The following is a description of other possible ways in which we may (and are permitted to) use and/or disclose your PHI.

- ***Required by Law***
We may use or disclose your PHI to the extent that federal law requires the use or disclosure. When used in this Notice, “required by law” is defined as it is in the HIPAA Privacy Rule. For example, we may disclose your PHI when required by national security laws or public health disclosure laws.
- ***Public Health Activities***
We may use or disclose your PHI for public health activities that are permitted or required by law. For example, we may use or disclose information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability, or we may disclose such information to a public health authority authorized to receive reports of child abuse or neglect. We also may disclose PHI, if directed by a public health authority, to a foreign government agency that is collaborating with the public health authority.
- ***Health Oversight Activities***
We may disclose your PHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as: audits; investigations; inspections; licensure or disciplinary actions; or civil, administrative, or criminal proceedings or actions. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies that oversee: (1) the health care system; (2) government benefit programs; (3) other government regulatory programs and (4) compliance with civil rights laws.
- ***Abuse or Neglect***
We may disclose your PHI to a government authority that is authorized by law to receive reports of abuse, neglect or domestic violence. Additionally, as required by law, we may disclose to a governmental entity, authorized to receive such information, your information if we believe that you have been a victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence.
- ***Legal Proceedings***
We may disclose your PHI: (1) in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding; (2) in response to an order of a court or administrative tribunal (to the extent such disclosure is expressly authorized) and (3) in response to a subpoena, a discovery request, or other lawful process, once we have met all administrative requirements of the HIPAA Privacy Rule. For example, we may disclose your PHI in response to a subpoena for such information, but only after we first meet certain conditions required by the HIPAA Privacy Rule.
- ***Law Enforcement***
Under certain conditions, we also may disclose your PHI to law enforcement officials. For example, some of the reasons for such a disclosure may include, but not be limited to: (1) it is required by law or some other legal process; (2) it is necessary to locate or identify a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person or (3) it is necessary to provide evidence of a crime that occurred on our premises.

- ***Coroners, Medical Examiners, Funeral Directors, and Organ Donation***
 We may disclose PHI to a coroner or medical examiner for purposes of identifying a deceased person, determining a cause of death or for the coroner or medical examiner to perform other duties authorized by law. We also may disclose, as authorized by law, information to funeral directors so that they may carry out their duties. Further, we may disclose PHI to organizations that handle organ, eye or tissue donation and transplantation.
- ***Research***
 We may disclose your PHI to researchers when an institutional review board or privacy board has: (1) reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of the information and (2) approved the research.
- ***To Prevent a Serious Threat to Health or Safety***
 Consistent with applicable federal and state laws, we may disclose your PHI if we believe that the disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public. We also may disclose PHI if it is necessary for law enforcement authorities to identify or apprehend an individual.
- ***Military Activity and National Security, Protective Services***
 Under certain conditions, we may disclose your PHI if you are, or were, Armed Forces personnel for activities deemed necessary by appropriate military command authorities. If you are a member of foreign military service, we may disclose, in certain circumstances, your information to the foreign military authority. We also may disclose your PHI to authorized federal officials for conducting national security and intelligence activities, and for the protection of the President, other authorized persons or heads of state.
- ***Inmates***
 If you are an inmate of a correctional institution, we may disclose your PHI to the correctional institution or to a law enforcement official for: (1) the institution to provide health care to you; (2) your health and safety and the health and safety of others or (3) the safety and security of the correctional institution.
- ***Workers' Compensation***
 We may disclose your PHI to comply with workers' compensation laws and other similar programs that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses.
- ***Others Involved in Your Health Care***
 Using our best judgment, we may make your PHI known to a family member, other relative, close personal friend or other personal representative that you identify. Such use will be based on how involved the person is in your care or payment that relates to your care. We may release information to parents or guardians, if allowed by law.

We also may disclose your information to an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort so that your family can be notified about your condition, status, and location.

If you are not present or able to agree to these disclosures of your PHI, then, using our professional judgment, we may determine whether the disclosure is in your best interest.

Required Disclosures of Your PHI

The following is a description of disclosures that we are required by law to make.

- ***Disclosures to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services***
 We are required to disclose your PHI to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services when the Secretary is investigating or determining our compliance with the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

- ***Disclosures to You***

We are required to disclose to you most of your PHI in a “designated record set” when you request access to this information. Generally, a designated record set contains medical and billing records, as well as other records that are used to make decisions about your health care benefits. We also are required to provide, upon your request, an accounting of most disclosures of your PHI that are for reasons other than treatment, payment and health care operations and are not disclosed through a signed authorization.

We will disclose your PHI to an individual who has been designated by you as your personal representative and who has qualified for such designation in accordance with relevant state law. However, before we will disclose PHI to such a person, you must submit a written notice of his/her designation, along with the documentation that supports his/her qualification (such as a power of attorney).

Even if you designate a personal representative, the HIPAA Privacy Rule permits us to elect not to treat the person as your personal representative if we have a reasonable belief that: (1) you have been, or may be, subjected to domestic violence, abuse or neglect by such person; (2) treating such person as your personal representative could endanger you or (3) we determine, in the exercise of our professional judgment, that it is not in your best interest to treat the person as your personal representative.

Other Uses and Disclosures of Your PHI

Other uses and disclosures of your PHI that are not described above will be made only with your written authorization. If you provide us with such an authorization, you may revoke the authorization in writing, and this revocation will be effective for future uses and disclosures of PHI. However, the revocation will not be effective for information that we already have used or disclosed, relying on the authorization.

YOUR RIGHTS

The following is a description of your rights with respect to your PHI:

- ***Right to Request a Restriction***

You have the right to request a restriction on the PHI we use or disclose about you for treatment, payment or health care operations.

We are not required to agree to any restriction that you may request. If we do agree to the restriction, we will comply with the restriction unless the information is needed to provide emergency treatment to you.

You may request a restriction by contacting the individual or office referenced in the beginning of this Notice. It is important that you direct your request for restriction to this individual or office so that we can begin to process your request. Requests sent to individuals or offices other than the one indicated might delay processing the request.

We will want to receive this information in writing and will instruct you where to send your request when you call. In your request, please tell us: (1) the information whose disclosure you want to limit and (2) how you want to limit our use and/or disclosure of the information.

- ***Right to Request Confidential Communications***

If you believe that a disclosure of all or part of your PHI may endanger you, you may request that we communicate with you regarding your information in an alternative manner or at an alternative location. For example, you may ask that we only contact you at your work address or via your work e-mail.

You may request a restriction by contacting the individual or office referenced in the beginning of this Notice. It is important that you direct your request for confidential communications to this individual or office so that we can begin to process your request. Requests sent to individuals or offices other than the one indicated might delay processing the request.

We will want to receive this information in writing and will instruct you where to send your written request when you call. In your request, please tell us: (1) that you want us to communicate your PHI with you in an alternative manner or at an alternative location and (2) that the disclosure of all or part of the PHI in a manner inconsistent with your instructions would put you in danger.

We will accommodate a request for confidential communications that is reasonable and that states that the disclosure of all or part of your PHI could endanger you. As permitted by the HIPAA Privacy Rule, “reasonableness” will (and is permitted to) include, when appropriate, making alternate arrangements regarding payment.

Accordingly, as a condition of granting your request, you will be required to provide us information concerning how payment will be handled. For example, if you submit a claim for payment, state or federal law (or our own contractual obligations) may require that we disclose certain financial claim information to the plan participant (e.g., an Explanation of Benefits “EOB”). Unless you have made other payment arrangements, the EOB (in which your PHI might be included) will be released to the Plan participant.

Once we receive all the information for such a request (along with the instructions for handling future communications), the request will be processed as soon as reasonably possible.

Prior to receiving the information necessary for this request, or during the time it takes to process it, PHI may be disclosed (such as through an EOB). Therefore, it is extremely important that you contact us at the number listed in this Notice *as soon as* you determine that you need to restrict disclosures of your PHI.

If you terminate your request for confidential communications, the restriction will be removed for all your PHI that we hold, including PHI that was previously protected. Therefore, you should not terminate a request for confidential communications if you remain concerned that disclosure of your PHI will endanger you.

▪ ***Right to Inspect and Copy***

You have the right to inspect and copy your PHI that is contained in a “designated record set.” Generally, a designated record set contains medical and billing records, as well as other records that are used to make decisions about your health care benefits. However, you may not inspect or copy psychotherapy notes or certain other information that may be contained in a designated record set.

To inspect and copy PHI that is contained in a designated record set, you must submit your request by contacting the individual or office referenced in the beginning of this Notice. It is important that you contact this individual entity to request an inspection and copying so that we can begin to process your request. Requests sent to individuals or offices other than the one indicated might delay the processing of the request. If you request a copy of the information, we may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing or other supplies associated with your request.

We may deny your request to inspect and copy your PHI in certain limited circumstances. If you are denied access to your information, you may request that the denial be reviewed. To request a review, you must contact the individual or office referenced in the beginning of this Notice. A licensed health care professional chosen by us will review your request and the denial. The person performing this review will not be the same one who denied your initial request. Under certain conditions, our denial will not be reviewable. If this event occurs, we will inform you in our denial that the decision is not reviewable.

- ***Right to Amend***

If you believe that your PHI is incorrect or incomplete, you may request that we amend your information. You may request that we amend your information by contacting the individual or office referenced in the beginning of this Notice. Additionally, your request should include the reason the amendment is necessary. It is important that you direct your request for amendment to this individual or office so that we can begin to process your request. Requests sent to individuals or offices other than the one indicated might delay processing the request.

In certain cases, we may deny your request for an amendment. For example, we may deny your request if the information you want to amend is not maintained by us, but by another entity. If we deny your request, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us. Your statement of disagreement will be linked with the disputed information and all future disclosures of the disputed information will include your statement.

- ***Right of an Accounting***

You have a right to an accounting of certain disclosures of your PHI that are for reasons other than treatment, payment or health care operations. No accounting of disclosures is required for disclosures made pursuant to a signed authorization by you or your personal representative. You should know that most disclosures of PHI will be for purposes of payment or health care operations, and, therefore, will not be subject to your right to an accounting. There also are other exceptions to this right.

An accounting will include the date(s) of the disclosure, to whom we made the disclosure, a brief description of the information disclosed and the purpose for the disclosure.

You may request an accounting by submitting your request in writing to the individual or office referenced in the beginning of this Notice. It is important that you direct your request for an accounting to this individual or office so that we can begin to process your request. Requests sent to individuals or offices other than the one indicated might delay processing the request.

Your request may be for disclosures made up to 6 years before the date of your request, but not for disclosures made before April 14, 2004. The first list you request within a 12-month period will be free. For additional lists, we may charge you for the costs of providing the list. We will notify you of the cost involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at the time before any costs are incurred.

- ***Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice***

You have the right to a paper copy of this Notice, even if you have agreed to accept this Notice electronically.

COMPLAINTS

You may complain to us if you believe that we have violated your privacy rights. You may file a complaint with us by contacting the individual or office referenced in the beginning of this Notice. A copy of a complaint form is available from this contact office.

You also may file a complaint with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Complaints filed directly with the Secretary must: (1) be in writing; (2) contain the name of the entity against which the complaint is lodged; (3) describe the relevant problems and (4) be filed within 180 days of the time you became or should have become aware of the problem.

We will not penalize or in any other way retaliate against you for filing a complaint with the Secretary or with us.