

Effective date of notice: 07/01/2013

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

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Contact Person: LAURA HUNTER; OFFICE MANAGER

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.

We are required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 ("HIPPA") and other applicable laws to maintain the privacy of your health information, to provide individuals with this Notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to such information, and to abide by the terms of this Notice. We respect our legal obligation to keep health information that identifies you private.

USES AND DISCLOSURES OF INFORMATION WITHOUT YOUR AUTHORIZATION

The most common reasons why we use or disclose your health information is for treatment, payment or health care operations. Examples of how we use or disclose information for treatment purposes are: setting up an appointment for you; testing or examining your eyes; prescribing glasses, contact lenses, or eye medications and faxing them to be filled; showing you low vision aids; referring you to another doctor or clinic for eye care or low vision aids or services; or getting copies of your health information from another professional that you may have seen before us. Examples of how we use or disclose your health information for payment purposes are: asking you about your health or vision care plans, or other sources of payment; preparing and sending bills or claims; and collecting unpaid amounts (either ourselves or through a collection agency or attorney). "Health care operations" mean those administrative and managerial functions that we have to do in order to run our office. Examples of how we use or disclose your health information for health care operations are: financial or billing audits; internal quality assurance; personnel decisions; participation in managed care plans; defense of legal matters; business planning; and outside storage of our records. We routinely use your health information inside our office for these purposes without any special permission. We also reserve the right to disclose your health information outside of our office for the above reasons without any special permission as well.

OTHER DISCLOSURES AND USES WE MAY MAKE WITHOUT YOUR AUTHORIZATION OR CONSENT

In some limited situations, the law allows or requires us to use or disclose your health information without your consent or authorization. Not all of these situations will apply to us; some may never come up at our office at all. Such uses and disclosures are:

- When a state or federal law mandates that certain health information be reported for a specific purpose;
- For public health purposes, such as contagious disease reporting, investigation or surveillance; and notices to and from the federal Food and Drug Administration regarding drugs or medical devices;
- Disclosures to governmental authorities about victims of suspected abuse; neglect or domestic violence;
- Uses and disclosures for health oversight activities, such as for the licensing of doctors; for audits by Medicare or Medicaid; or for investigation of possible violations of health care laws;
- Disclosures for judicial and administrative proceedings, such as in response to subpoenas or orders of courts or administrative agencies;
- Disclosures for law enforcement purposes, such as to provide information about someone who is or is suspected to be a victim of a crime; to provide information about a crime at our office; or to report a crime that happened somewhere else;
- Disclosure to a medical examiner to identify a dead person or to determine the cause of death; or to funeral directors to aid in burial; or to organizations that handle organ or tissue donations;
- Uses or disclosures for health related research;
- Uses and disclosures to prevent a serious threat to health or safety;
- Uses or disclosures for specialized government functions, such as for the protection of the president or high ranking government officials; for lawful national intelligence activities; for military purposes; or for the evaluation and health of members of the foreign service;
- Disclosures of de-identified information;
- Disclosures relating to worker's compensation programs;
- Disclosures of a "limited data set" for research, public health, or health care operations;
- Incidental disclosures that are an unavoidable by-product of permitted uses or disclosures;
- Disclosures to "business associates" and their subcontractors who perform health care operations for us and who commit to respect the privacy of your health information in accordance with HIPPA.

Unless you object, we will also share relevant information about your care with any of your personal representatives who are helping you with your eye care. Upon your death, we may disclose to your family members or to other persons who were involved in your care or payment for health care prior to your death (such as your personal representative) health information relevant to their involvement in your care unless doing so is inconsistent with your preference as expressed through written consent to us prior to your death.

SPECIFIC USES AND DISCLOSURES OF INFORMATION REQUIRING YOUR AUTHORIZATION

Marketing activities. We must obtain your authorization prior to using or disclosing any of your health information for marketing purposes unless such marketing communications take the form of face-to-face communications we may make with individuals or promotional gifts of nominal value that we may provide. If such marketing involves financial payment to us from a third party your authorization must also include consent to such payment.

Sale of health information. We do not currently sell or plan to sell your health information and we must seek your authorization prior to doing so.

Appointment reminders. We may call, write or email you to remind you of scheduled appointments, notify you that it is time to make a routine appointment, or to educate you of other treatments or services available at our office that you could benefit from. Unless you have provided a written request, we will provide at least one of the following methods to remind you of an appointment; a post card in the mail, a phone call with the intent of leaving a message through the answering machine or whoever answers the phone, and/or an email.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PROVIDE AN AUTHORIZATION FOR OTHER USES AND DISCLOSURES

- Other uses and disclosures of your health information that are not described in this Notice will be made only with your written authorization.
- You may give us written authorization permitting us to use your health information or to disclose it to anyone for any purpose.
- We will obtain your written authorization for uses and disclosures of your health information that are not identified in this Notice or are not otherwise permitted by applicable law.
- We must agree to your request to restrict disclosure of your health plan if the disclosure is for the purpose of carrying out payment or health care operations and is not otherwise required by law and such information pertains solely to a health care item of service for which you have paid in full (or for which another person other than the health plan has paid in full on your behalf).

Any authorization you provide to us regarding the use and disclosure of your health information may be revoked by you in writing at any time. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your health information for the reasons described in the authorization. However, we are generally unable to retract any disclosures that we may have already made with your authorization. We may also be required to disclose health information as necessary for purposes of payment for services received by you prior to the date you revoked your authorization.

YOUR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION

You have many rights concerning the confidentiality of your health information. You have the right:

- **To request restrictions on the health information we may use and disclose for treatment, payment and health care operations.** We are not required to agree to these requests. To request restrictions, please send a written request to us.
- **To receive confidential communications of health information about you in any manner other than described in our authorization request form.** You must make such a request in writing. However, we reserve the right to determine if we will be able to continue your treatment under such restrictive authorizations.
- **To inspect or copy your health information.** You must make such request in writing. If you request a copy of your health information we may charge you a fee for the cost of copying, mailing, or other supplies. In certain circumstances we may deny your request to inspect or copy your health information, subject to applicable law. You are allowed to request an electronic copy of your electronic health record.
- **To amend health information.** If you feel that health information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. To request amendment, you must request in writing. You must also give us a valid reason to support your request. We may deny your request to amend your health information if it is not in writing or does not provide a reason to support your request. We may also deny your request if the health information:
 - Was not created by us, unless the person that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment,
 - Is not part of the health information kept by or for us,
 - Is not part of the information you would be permitted to inspect or copy, or
 - Is accurate and complete.
- **To receive an accounting or disclosures of your health information.** You must make such a request in writing. Not all health information is subject to this request. Your request must state a time period for the information you would like to receive, no longer than 6 years prior to the date of your request and may not include dates before April 14, 2013.
- **To designate another party to receive your health information.** If your request for access of your health information directs us to transmit a copy of the health information directly to another person the request must be made by you in writing to the address below and must clearly identify the designated recipient and where to send the copy of the health information.

Contact Person:

Our contact person for all questions, requests or for further information related to the privacy of your health information is: **Laura Hunter**

Complaints:

If you think that we have not properly respected the privacy of your health information, you are free to complain to us or to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights. We will not retaliate against you if you make a complaint. If you want to complain to us, send a written complaint to the office contact person at the address, fax, or email shown above. If you prefer, you can discuss your complaint in person or by phone.

Changes to This Notice:

We reserve the right to change our privacy practices and to apply the revised practices to health information about you that we already have as well any information that we may generate in the future. Any revision to our privacy practices will be described in a revised Notice that will be posted prominently in our facility. Copies of this Notice are also available upon request at our reception area.

Notice Revised and Effective: **July 01, 2013**

**For more information call or visit the office contact person at the phone number or address shown at the beginning of this Notice.*