



WHATCOM MEDIC ONE
BELLINGHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT
1800 Broadway
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Bellingham, WA 98227
(360) 647-6351

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Effective Date: April 14, 2003

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.

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact the Privacy Officer at Whatcom Medic One.

WHO MUST FOLLOW THIS NOTICE: This notice describes the privacy practices of Whatcom Medic One.

OUR OBLIGATIONS: We are required by law to:

- Maintain the privacy of Protected Health Information (PHI);
- Give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices in regard to your PHI; and
- Follow the terms of our notice that is currently in effect.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION: The following categories describe ways that we may use and disclose health information about you, known as Protected Health Information or PHI. In most cases, this information may be released *without* your written permission to object, unless prohibited by a more stringent State law. Access to your PHI in the following categories will be on a "needs to know basis" only. The records must not be redisclosed and appropriate measures must be taken to keep the records secure. Some of the categories include examples. Every type of use or disclosure of PHI in a particular category is not listed.

For Treatment. We may use written or verbal PHI about your medical condition and treatment that is obtained from you and others, such as, doctors and nurses who give orders to allow us to provide treatment to you. We may disclose PHI to doctors, nurses, technicians, specialists or other personnel, including people outside our facility, who may be involved in your current medical care. We may transfer your PHI by radio or telephone to the hospital or dispatch center.

For Payment. We may use and disclose PHI so that we or other providers may bill or receive payment from you, an insurance company or a third party for the treatment and services you received. For example, we may give your health insurance carrier information about your treatment in order to make medical necessity determinations for payment or we may share PHI with the billing department or collection agency.

For Health Care Operations. We may use and disclose PHI for our health care operations. This may involve quality assurance, licensing and training programs. These uses and disclosures are necessary for our operation and management purposes and are necessary to make sure that the services we provide you are of the highest quality.

To Individuals Involved in Your Care. We may release PHI to an immediate family member or to another individual with whom you may have a close personal relationship, if we obtain your verbal agreement to do so and if you do not raise an objection verbally or in writing. If we are unable to obtain your agreement because of other circumstances, we will make the disclosure if we believe it is in your best interests and relevant to your care.

For Research. We may disclose PHI for research projects that are subject to strict approvals and oversight. The project must contain reasonable safeguards to protect against identifying, directly or indirectly, any patient in any report of the project. There must be safeguards to protect the information from redisclosure. This process evaluates a proposed research project and its use of PHI to balance the benefits of research with the need for privacy of your PHI.

For Other Circumstances Required By Law:

- For health care and legal compliance activities;
- To a public health authority in certain situations as required by law, such as to report abuse, neglect or domestic violence;
- For health oversight activities including audits or government investigations, inspections, disciplinary proceedings, and other administrative or judicial actions undertaken by the government (or their contractors) by law to oversee the health care system;
- For judicial and administrative proceedings as required by a court or administrative order, or in some cases in response to a subpoena or other legal process;

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For Other Circumstances Required By Law (continued)

- For law enforcement activities, but only in very limited situations as required by law such as to avert a serious threat to the public;
- For military, national defense and security and other special government functions;
- To avert a serious threat to the health and safety of a person or the public at large;
- For workers' compensation purposes and in compliance with workers' compensation laws;
- To coroners or medical examiners to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death;
- To organ and tissue donation banks as necessary to facilitate organ, tissue donation and transplantation;
- To a correctional institution or other law enforcement custodial situations that have lawful custody of you.

Other Uses and Disclosures:

Except for the purposes described above, we will use and disclose PHI only with your written authorization. You may revoke the authorization at any time, in writing, except for the PHI that we have already used or disclosed in respect to that authorization.

YOUR RIGHTS: You have the following rights in regard to your PHI, including:

- **Right to Inspect and Copy.** You have the right to inspect and copy PHI that may be used to make decisions about your care or payment for your care. There may be a fee for copying and it must be paid prior to access of the records. In certain limited circumstances we may deny you access to your PHI. You may appeal certain types of denials. To inspect and copy this PHI, you must make your request in writing to the Privacy Officer of Whatcom Medic One.
- **Right to Amend.** If you feel that PHI we have is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for us. We are permitted by law to deny you access in certain limited circumstances. To request an amendment, you must make your request in writing to the Privacy Officer of Whatcom Medic One.
- **Right to an Accounting of Disclosures.** You have the right to request an accounting of certain disclosures of PHI we made. We are not required to give you an accounting of information we have used or disclosed for treatment, payment or health care operations or to business associates or for PHI for which you have already given us written authorization. You may request an accounting by written request to the Privacy Officer of Whatcom Medic One.
- **Right to Request Restrictions.** You have the right to request that we restrict how we use and disclose your medical information that we have about you. Whatcom Medic One is not required to agree to any restrictions you request, but any restrictions agreed to by Whatcom Medic One in writing are binding on Whatcom Medic One. You may request a restriction by written request to the Privacy Officer of Whatcom Medic One.
- **Right to Confidential Communications.** You have the right to request how and where we contact you about your PHI, for example, you may request that we contact you at work or only by mail. You may request confidential communications by written request to the Privacy Officer of Whatcom Medic One.
- **Internet, Electronic Mail and the Right to Obtain a Copy of Paper Notice on Request.** If we maintain a web site, we will prominently post a copy of this Notice on our web site. If you allow us, we will forward a copy of this Notice by electronic mail instead of on paper and you may always request a paper copy of the Notice.

CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE: We reserve the right to change this Notice. We reserve the right to make the revised or changed notice effective for the PHI we already have, as well as, any information we receive in the future. We will post a copy of the current notice in our facilities. The notice will contain the effective date on the first page.

COMPLAINTS: If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with Whatcom Medic One or the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. All complaints must be made in writing. **You will not be penalized for filing a complaint. It will not change our treatment of you in any way.** To file a complaint with us, contact the Privacy Officer at Whatcom Medic One.

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