

NOTICE OF PRIVACY POLICIES FOR LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

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LOWNDES COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
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Valdosta, GA 31601 (229) 333-5257
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751 County Lane
Lake Park, GA 31636 (229) 559-6470

Notice of Health Information Practices

THIS NOTICE OF HEALTH INFORMATION PRACTICES DESCRIBES HOW INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

Introduction

It is important to us that you understand what information we collect about you and how it is used. We want you to know that we limit the collection and disclosure of information to only that which we believe is necessary to serve you and administer our business. This Notice is effective September 23, 2013 and applies to all protected health information as defined by federal regulations.

Understanding Your Health Record/Information

Each time you visit the health department a record of your visit is made. This record contains your symptoms, examination and test results, diagnoses, treatment, and a plan for future care or treatment. This information, often referred to as your health or medical record, serves as:

1. A basis for planning your care and treatment among the many health professionals who contribute to your care.
2. A legal document describing the care you received.
3. A way that you or a third-party payer can verify that services billed were actually provided.
4. A source of data for the education of health professionals or for medical research.
5. A source of information for public health officials charged with improving the health of this state and nation.
6. A source of data for our planning and marketing, to improve the care we render and the outcomes we achieve.
7. A source of supporting data, which allows us to receive state and federal funding to provide public health services.

Understanding what is in your record and how your health information is used helps you to ensure its accuracy. You can better understand who, what, when, where, and why others may access your health information. It allows you to make more informed decisions when authorizing disclosure to others.

Your Health Information Rights

Although your health record is the property of the health department, the information belongs to you. You have the following rights:

1. To receive a paper copy of this notice of information practices upon request.
2. To inspect and/or receive a copy of your health record, including medical and billing records (but not psychotherapy notes). Your health record copy may be available to you in electronic format if you request.
3. To request an amendment of your health record.
4. To receive an accounting of disclosures of your health information for purposes other than treatment, payment, and health care operations or for which you have provided written authorization.
5. To request a restriction on certain uses and disclosures of your information. The health department is not required to agree to your request unless you are asking the department to restrict the use and disclosure of certain Protected Health Information to a health plan if you have paid for health services "out-of-pocket" in full.
6. To revoke your authorization to use or disclose your health information except to the extent that action has already been taken.
7. To be notified upon a breach of any of your unsecured Protected Health Information.

Our Responsibilities

The health department is required to:

1. Maintain the privacy of your health information by abiding by the terms of this notice.
2. Provide you with this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices regarding information we collect and maintain about you.
3. Restrict uses and disclosures for marketing purposes or disclosures that constitute a sale of your Protected Health Information unless you have provided written authorization.
4. Notify you if we are not able to agree to a requested restriction.
5. Agree to reasonable requests from you to deliver health information in other ways or at other locations.

We reserve the right to change our practices and make those changes effective for all protected health information we maintain. Should our information practices change, we will post the revised notices in our facility and provide you with a copy on request.

We will not use or disclose your health information without your permission except as described in this notice. We will also discontinue to use or disclose your health information after we have received a written revocation of the authorization according to the procedures included in the authorization.

To ensure confidentiality and privacy, any type of photography or electronic recording (video or audio) is strictly prohibited in our facility. Thank you for your understanding and compliance.

For More Information or to Report a Problem

If you are comfortable with the content of this policy and will allow us to exchange information about you as outlined, then you need only to sign the acknowledgement attached. If you prefer to limit disclosure of information about you, please note that on the acknowledgement form and contact the Ben Hill County Board of Health Privacy Officer for further information.

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you can file a complaint with the health department's Privacy Office, or with the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. There will be no retaliation for filing a complaint with either the Privacy Officer or the Office for Civil Rights. The address for OCR is listed below:

Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W. Room 509F, HHH Building Washington, D.C. 20201
Further information is available at the OCR website, www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/

Examples of Disclosures for Treatment, Payment and Health Operations

We will use your health information for treatment.

For example: Information obtained by a nurse, physician, or other member of your health care team will be recorded in your record and used to determine the course of treatment that should work best for you. Your physician will document in your record his or her expectations of the members of your health care team. Members of your health care team will then record the actions they took and their observations. In that way, the physician will know how you are responding to treatment. If you receive additional treatment from another physician, hospital, or laboratory we may share information with that provider about services you received in this facility.

We will use your health information for payment.

For example: A bill may be sent to you, a health insurance company, Medicaid or Medicare. This information on or with the bill may include information that identifies you, as well as your diagnosis, procedures, and supplies used. We may contact or share information with other payment services.

We will use your health information for regular health operations.

For example: Members of the medical staff, the risk or quality improvement manager, or members of the quality improvement team may use information in your health record to assess the care and outcomes in your case and others like it. This information will then be used in an effort to continually improve the quality and effectiveness of the healthcare and service we provide.

Business associates: There are some services provided in our organization through contacts with business associates. Examples are providers of our computer software where electronic records are kept. To protect your health information, however, we require the business associate to appropriately safeguard your information.

Communication with family: Health professionals, using their best judgment, may disclose to a family member, other relative, close personal friend or any other person you identify, health information relevant to that person's involvement in your care or payment related to your care.

Research: We may disclose information to researchers when an institutional review board that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your health information has approved their research.

Data breach notification: We may use and disclose information to provide legally required notices of unauthorized access to your health record.

Funeral directors: We may disclose health information to funeral directors consistent with applicable law to carry out their duties.

Organ procurement organizations: Consistent with applicable law, we may disclose health information to organ procurement organizations or other entities engaged in the procurement, banking, or transplantation of organs for the purpose of tissue donation and transplant.

Planning/Marketing: We may contact you to provide appointment reminders or information about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services for which you may be eligible.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA): We may disclose the FDA health information relative to adverse events with respect to food, supplements, product and product defects, or post marketing surveillance information to enable product recalls, repairs, or replacement.

Workers Compensation: We may disclose health information to the extent authorized by and to the extent necessary to comply with laws relating to workers compensation or other similar programs established by law.

Public health: As required by law, we may disclose your health information to public health or legal authorities charged with preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability. We may also disclose your health information to support funding from state and federal grants for the various public health services we provide and the administration of public health services.

Law enforcement: We may disclose health information for law enforcement purposes as required by law or in response to a valid subpoena.