
Privacy Notice

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.

SUMMARY

In order to provide you with benefits, West Virginia Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) will receive personal information about your health, from you, your physicians, hospitals, and others who provide you with health care services. We are required to keep this information confidential. This notice of our privacy practices is intended to inform you of the ways we may use your information and the occasions on which we may disclose this information to others.

Occasionally, we may use members' information when providing treatment. We use members' health information to provide benefits, including making claims payments and providing customer service. We disclose members' information to health care providers to assist them to provide you with treatment or to help them receive payment, we may disclose information to other insurance companies as necessary to receive payment, we may use the information within our organization to evaluate quality and improve health care operations, and we may make other uses and disclosures of members' information as required by law or as permitted by CHIP policies.

KINDS OF INFORMATION THAT THIS NOTICE APPLIES TO

This notice applies to any information in our possession that would allow someone to identify you and learn something about your health. It does not apply to information that contains nothing that could reasonably be used to identify you.

OUR LEGAL DUTIES

- ◆ We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your health information
- ◆ We are required to provide this notice of our privacy practices and legal duties regarding health information to anyone who asks for it.
- ◆ We are required to respond to your requests or concerns within a timely manner.
- ◆ We are required to abide by the terms of this notice until we officially adopt a new notice.

WHO MUST ABIDE BY THIS NOTICE

- ◆ CHIP.
- ◆ All employees, staff, students, volunteers and other personnel whose work is under the direct control of CHIP.

The people and organizations to which this notice applies (referred to as "we," "our," and "us") have agreed to abide by its terms. We may share your information with each other for purposes of treatment, and as necessary for payment and operations activities as described below.

HOW WE MAY USE OR DISCLOSE YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION.

We may use your health information, or disclose it to others, for a number of different reasons. This notice describes these reasons. For each reason, we have written a brief explanation. We also provide some examples. These examples do not include all of the specific ways we may use or disclose your information. But any time we use your information, or disclose it to someone else, it will fit one of the reasons listed here.

1. Treatment. We may use your health information to provide you with medical care and services. This means that our employees, staff, students, volunteers and others, whose work is under our direct control, may read your health information to learn about your medical condition and use it to help you make decisions about your care. For instance, a health plan nurse may take your blood pressure at a health fair and use the results to discuss with you related health issues. We will also disclose your information to others to provide you with options for medical

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treatment or services. For instance, we may use health information to identify members with certain chronic illnesses, and send information to them or to their doctors regarding treatment alternatives.

2. Payment. We will use your health information, and disclose it to others, as necessary to make payment for the health care services you receive. For instance, an employee in our customer service department or at our claims processing administrator may use your health information to help pay your claims. And we may send information about you and your claim payments to the doctor or hospital that provided you with the health care services. We will also send you information about claims we pay and claims we do not pay (called an "explanation of benefits"). The explanation of benefits will include information about claims we receive for the subscriber and each dependent that is enrolled together under a single contract or identification number. Under certain circumstances, you may receive this information confidentially: see the "Confidential Communication" section in this notice. We may also disclose some of your health information to companies with whom we contract for payment-related services. For instance, if you owe us money, we may give information about you to a collection company that we contract with to collect bills for us. We will not use or disclose more information for payment purposes than is necessary.

3. Health Care Operations. We may use your health information for activities that are necessary to operate this organization. This includes reading your health information to review the performance of our staff. We may also use your information and the information of other members to plan what services we need to provide, expand, or reduce. We may also provide health information to students who are authorized to receive training here. We may disclose your health information as necessary to others who we contract with to provide administrative services. This includes our third-party administrators, lawyers, auditors, accreditation services, and consultants, for instance. These third-parties are called "Business Associates" and are held to the same standards as WVCHIP with regard to ensuring the privacy, security, integrity, and confidentiality of your personal information. If, in the course of healthcare operations, your confidential information is transmitted electronically, WVCHIP requires that information be sent in a secure and encrypted format that renders it unreadable and unusable to unauthorized users.

4. Legal Requirement to Disclose Information. We will disclose your information when we are required by law to do so. This includes reporting information to government agencies that have the legal responsibility to monitor the state health care system. For instance, we may be required to disclose your health information, and the information of others, if we are audited by state auditors. We will also disclose your health information when we are required to do so by a court order or other judicial or administrative process. We will only disclose the minimum amount of health information necessary to fulfill the legal requirement.

5. Public Health Activities. We will disclose your health information when required to do so for public health purposes. This includes reporting certain diseases, births, deaths, and reactions to certain medications. It may also include notifying people who have been exposed to a disease.

6. To Report Abuse. We may disclose your health information when the information relates to a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence. We will make this report only in accordance with laws that require or allow such reporting, or with your permission.

7. Law Enforcement. We may disclose your health information for law enforcement purposes. This includes providing information to help locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person, or in connection with suspected criminal activity. We must also disclose your health information to a federal agency investigating our compliance with federal privacy regulations. We will only disclose the minimum amount of health information necessary to fulfill the investigation request.

8. Specialized Purposes. We may disclose the health information of members of the armed forces as authorized by military command authorities. We may disclose your health information for a number of other specialized purposes. We will only disclose as much information as is necessary for the purpose. For instance, we may disclose your information to coroners, medical examiners and funeral directors; to organ procurement organizations (for organ, eye, or tissue donation); or for national security, intelligence, and protection of the president. We also may disclose health information about an inmate to a correctional institution or to law enforcement officials, to provide the inmate with health care, to protect the health and safety of the inmate and others, and for the safety, administration, and maintenance of the correctional institution.

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9. To Avert a Serious Threat. We may disclose your health information if we decide that the disclosure is necessary to prevent serious harm to the public or to an individual. The disclosure will only be made to someone who is able to prevent or reduce the threat.

10. Family and Friends. We may disclose your health information to a member of your family or to someone else who is involved in your medical care or payment for care. This may include telling a family member about the status of a claim, or what benefits you are eligible to receive. In the event of a disaster, we may provide information about you to a disaster relief organization so they can notify your family of your condition and location. We will not disclose your information to family or friends if you object.

11. Research. We may disclose your health information in connection with medical research projects. Federal rules govern any disclosure of your health information for research purposes without your authorization.

12. Information to Members. We may use your health information to provide you with additional information. This may include sending newsletters or other information to your address. This may also include giving you information about treatment options, alternative settings for care, or other health-related options that we cover.

YOUR RIGHTS

1. Authorization. We may use or disclose your health information for any purpose that is listed in this notice without your written authorization. We will not use or disclose your health information for any other reason without your authorization. We will only disclose the minimum amount of health information necessary to fulfill the authorization request. If you authorize us to use or disclose your health information, in additional circumstances you have the right to revoke the authorization at any time. For information about how to authorize us to use or disclose your health information, or about how to revoke an authorization, contact the person listed under "Whom to Contact" at the end of this notice. You may not revoke an authorization for us to use and disclose your information to the extent that we have taken action in reliance on the authorization. If the authorization is to permit disclosure of your information to an insurance company, as a condition of obtaining coverage, other law may allow the insurer to continue to use your information to contest claims or your coverage, even after you have revoked the authorization.

2. Request Restrictions. You have the right to ask us to restrict how we use or disclose your health information. We will consider your request. But we are not required to agree. If we do agree, we will comply with the request unless the information is needed to provide you with emergency treatment. We cannot agree to restrict disclosures that are required by law.

3. Confidential Communication. If you believe that the disclosure of certain information could endanger you, you have the right to ask us to communicate with you at a special address or by a special means. For example, you may ask us to send explanations of benefits that contain your health information to a different address rather than to your home. Or you may ask us to speak to you personally on the telephone rather than sending your health information by mail. We will agree to any reasonable request.

4. Inspect And Receive a Copy of Health Information. You have a right to inspect the health information about you that we have in our records, and to receive a copy of it. This right is limited to information about you that is kept in records that are used to make decisions about you. For instance, this includes claim and enrollment records. If you want to review or receive a copy of these records, you must make the request in writing. We may charge a fee for the cost of copying and mailing the records. To ask to inspect your records, or to receive a copy, contact the person listed under "Whom to Contact" at the end of this notice. We will respond to your request within 30 days. We may deny you access to certain information. If we do, we will give you the reason, in writing. We will also explain how you may appeal the decision.

5. Amend Health Information. You have the right to ask us to amend health information about you, which you believe is not correct, or not complete. You must make this request in writing, and give us the reason you believe the information is not correct or complete. We will respond to your request in writing within 30 days. We may deny your request if we did not create the information, if it is not part of the records we use to make decisions

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about you, if the information is something you would not be permitted to inspect or copy, or if it is complete and accurate.

6. Accounting of Disclosures. You have a right to receive an accounting of certain disclosures of your information to others. This accounting will list the times we have given your health information to others. The list will include dates of the disclosures, the names of the people or organizations to whom the information was disclosed, a description of the information, and the reason. We will provide the first list of disclosures you request at no charge. We may charge you for any additional lists you request during the following 12 months. You must tell us the time period you want the list to cover. You may not request a time period longer than six years. We cannot include disclosures made before April 14, 2003. Disclosures for the following reasons will not be included on the list: disclosures for treatment, payment, or health care operations; disclosures for national security purposes; disclosures to correctional or law enforcement personnel; disclosures that you have authorized; and disclosures made directly to you.

7. Paper Copy of this Privacy Notice. You have a right to receive a paper copy of this notice. If you have received this notice electronically, you may receive a paper copy by contacting the person listed under "Whom to Contact" at the end of this notice.

8. Complaints. You have a right to complain about our privacy practices, if you think your privacy has been violated. You may file your complaint with the person listed under "Whom to Contact" at the end of this notice. You may also file a complaint directly with the: Region III, Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 150 South Independence Mall West, Suite 372, Public Ledger Building, Philadelphia, PA 19106-9111. All complaints must be in writing. We will not take any retaliation against you if you file a complaint.

OUR RIGHT TO CHANGE THIS NOTICE

We reserve the right to change our privacy practices, as described in this notice, at any time. We reserve the right to apply these changes to any health information, which we already have, as well as to health information we receive in the future. Before we make any change in the privacy practices described in this notice, we will write a new notice that includes the change. The new notice will include an effective date. We will mail the new notice to all subscribers within 60 days of the effective date.

WHOM TO CONTACT

- ◆ For more information about this notice, or
- ◆ For more information about our privacy policies, or
- ◆ If you have any questions about the privacy and security of your records, or
- ◆ If you want to exercise any of your rights, as listed on this notice, or
- ◆ If you want to request a copy of our current notice of privacy practices. Copies of this notice are also available at local WV DHHR offices and by email. You may contact the person named below by mail or phone at (304) 558-2732 or send an email to: wvchip@wv.gov to request the notice electronically. This notice is also available on our website: www.chip.wv.gov.

WVCHIP HIPAA Compliance Officer ● #2 Hale Street, Suite 101 ● Charleston, WV 25301

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