

Notice of Privacy Practices

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.

Your health record contains personal information about you and your health. This information about you that may identify you and that relates to your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition and related health care services is referred to as *Protected Health Information* ("PHI"). This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how we may use and disclose your PHI in accordance with applicable law, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA"), regulations promulgated under HIPAA including the HIPAA Privacy and Security Rules. It also describes your rights regarding how you may gain access to and control your PHI.

We are required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI. We are required to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices. We reserve the right to change the terms of our Notice of Privacy Practices at any time. Any new Notice of Privacy Practices will be effective for all PHI that we maintain at that time. We will provide you with a copy of the revised Notice of Privacy Practices by sending a copy to you in the mail upon request or providing one to you at your next appointment.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

For Treatment. Your PHI may be used and disclosed by those who are involved in your care for the purpose of providing, coordinating, or managing your health care treatment and related services. This includes consultation with clinical supervisors or other treatment team members. We may disclose PHI to any other consultant only with your authorization.

For Payment. We may use and disclose PHI so that we can receive payment for the treatment services provided to you. This will only be done with your authorization. Examples of payment-related activities are: making a determination of eligibility or coverage for insurance benefits, processing claims with your insurance company, reviewing services provided to you to determine medical necessity, or undertaking utilization review activities. If it becomes necessary to use collection processes due to lack of payment for services, we will only disclose the minimum amount of PHI necessary for purposes of collection.

For Health Care Operations. We may use or disclose, as needed, your PHI in order to support our business activities including, but not limited to, quality assessment activities, employee review activities, licensing, and conducting or arranging for other business activities. For example, we may share your PHI with third parties that perform various business activities (e.g., billing or typing services) provided we have a written contract with the business that requires it to safeguard the privacy of your PHI. For training or teaching purposes PHI will be disclosed only with your authorization.

Required by Law. Under the law, we must disclose your PHI to you upon your request. In addition, we must make disclosures to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services for the purpose of investigating or determining our compliance with the requirements of the Privacy Rule.

Without Authorization. The following is a list of the categories of uses and disclosures permitted by HIPAA without an authorization. Applicable law and ethical standards permit us to disclose information about you without your authorization only in a limited number of situations.

Child Abuse or Neglect. If a clinician, in his/her professional capacity, has a reasonable cause to believe that a minor child is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from (i) abuse inflicted upon him/her causing harm or substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare, including sexual abuse, or (ii) neglect, including malnutrition, he/she must immediately report such condition to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families.

Disabled and Elder Abuse. If a clinician has reasonable cause to believe that a disabled person or an elderly person (age 60 or older) is suffering from, or has died as a result of, abuse, he/she must immediately report this to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission or the Massachusetts Department of Elder Affairs.

Health Oversight. The Boards of Registration of our providers has the power, when necessary, to subpoena relevant records should the clinician be the focus of an inquiry.

Judicial or Administrative Proceedings. If a clinician is involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your diagnosis, treatment, and the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law and will not be released without written authorization from you or your legally-appointed representative, or by court order.

Serious Threat to Health or Safety. If you communicate to your clinician an explicit threat to kill or inflict serious bodily injury upon an identified person, and you have the apparent intent and ability to carry out the threat, he/she must take reasonable precautions. Reasonable precautions may include warning the potential victim, notifying law enforcement, or arranging for your hospitalization. The clinician must also do so if he/she knows you have a history of physical violence or believes there is a clear and present danger that you will attempt to kill or inflict bodily injury upon an identified person. Furthermore, if you present a clear and present danger to yourself and refuse further appropriate treatment, and the clinician have a reasonable basis to believe that you can be committed to a hospital, he/she must seek said commitment and may contact members of your family or other individuals if it would assist in protecting you.

Worker's Compensation. If you file a workers' compensation claim, your records relevant to that claim will not be confidential to entities such as your employer, the insurer and the Division of Worker's Compensation.

With Authorization. Uses and disclosures not specifically permitted by applicable law will be made only with your written authorization, which may be revoked at any time, except to the extent that we have already made a use or disclosure based upon your authorization. The following uses and disclosures will be made only with your written authorization: (i) most uses and disclosures of psychotherapy notes which are separated from the rest of your medical record; (ii) most uses and disclosures of PHI for marketing purposes, including subsidized treatment communications; (iii) disclosures that constitute a sale of PHI; and (iv) other uses and disclosures not described in this Notice of Privacy Practices.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR PHI

You have the following rights regarding PHI we maintain about you. To exercise any of these rights, please submit your request in writing to our Privacy Officer at Mass Bay Counseling of Quincy:

- **Right of Access to Inspect and Copy.** You have the right, which may be restricted only in exceptional circumstances, to inspect and copy PHI that is maintained in a “designated record set”. A designated record set contains mental health/medical and billing records and any other records that are used to make decisions about your care. Your right to inspect and copy PHI will be restricted only in those situations where there is compelling evidence that access would cause serious harm to you or if the information is contained in separately maintained psychotherapy notes. We may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee for copies. If your records are maintained electronically, you may also request an electronic copy of your PHI. You may also request that a copy of your PHI be provided to another person.
- **Right to Amend.** If you feel that the PHI we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information although we are not required to agree to the amendment. If we deny your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us. We may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and will provide you with a copy. Please contact the Privacy Officer if you have any questions.
- **Right to an Accounting of Disclosures.** You have the right to request an accounting of certain of the disclosures that we make of your PHI. We may charge you a reasonable fee if you request more than one accounting in any 12-month period.
- **Right to Request Restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the use or disclosure of your PHI for treatment, payment, or health care operations. We are not required to agree to your request unless the request is to restrict disclosure of PHI to a health plan for purposes of carrying out payment or health care operations, and the PHI pertains to a health care item or service that you paid for out of pocket. In that case, we are required to honor your request for a restriction.
- **Right to Request Confidential Communication.** You have the right to request that we communicate with you about health matters in a certain way or at a certain location. We will accommodate reasonable requests. We may require information regarding how payment will be handled or specification of an alternative address or other method of contact as a condition for accommodating your request. We will not ask you for an explanation of why you are making the request.
- **Breach Notification.** If there is a breach of unsecured PHI concerning you, we may be required to notify you of this breach, including what happened and what you can do to protect yourself.
- **Right to a Copy of this Notice.** You have the right to a copy of this notice.

COMPLAINTS

If you believe we have violated your privacy rights, you have the right to file a complaint in writing with our Privacy Officer at Mass Bay Counseling of Quincy or with the Secretary of Health and Human Services at 200 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20201 or by calling (202) 619-0257. **We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.**

The effective date of this revised Notice of Privacy Practices is June 11, 2015.