

HIPAA Privacy Notice - Ashland County (ACHHSD)

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY.

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact our Privacy Officer at (715) 682-7004.

WHO WILL FOLLOW THIS NOTICE:

This notice describes our Department's practices and that of:

Any health care professional authorized to enter information into your chart, including but not limited to, Department staff, contracted individuals, contracted agencies and their employees, students, and interns.

All departments and divisions/units of WCDHHS.

Any member of a volunteer group.

All employees, staff, and other county personnel.

Ashland County Health & Human Services Department includes the following Divisions: Children and Families; Adult Services/ADRC of the North Branch; Economic Support; Public Health; Community Service Programs, and Child Support.

All these entities, sites, and locations will follow the terms of this notice. In addition, these entities, sites, and locations may share medical information with each other for treatment, payment, or hospital operations purposes described in this notice.

OUR PLEDGE REGARDING MEDICAL INFORMATION:

We understand that medical information about you and your health is personal. We are committed to protecting medical information about you. We create a record of the care and services you receive. We need this record to provide you with quality care and to comply with certain legal requirements. This notice applies to all of the records of your care generated by the ACHHSD, whether made by our personnel or your personal doctor or other practitioners involved in your care. Your personal doctor may have different policies or notices regarding the doctor's use and disclosure of your medical information created in the doctor's office or clinic. This notice will tell you about the ways in which we may use and disclose medical information about you. We also describe your rights and certain obligations we have regarding the use and disclosure of medical information.

We are required by law to:

Make sure that medical information that identifies you is kept private;

Give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to medical information about you; and

Follow the terms of the notice that are currently in effect.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:

The following categories describe different ways what we use and disclose medical information. For each category of uses or disclosures, we will explain what we mean and try to give some examples. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed. However, all of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of the categories.

For Treatment. We may use medical information about you to provide you with medical treatment or services. We may disclose medical information about you to doctors, nurses, technicians, health care students, clergy, social workers, and others who are involved in your care. For example, a doctor treating you for a broken leg may need to know if you have diabetes because diabetes may slow the healing process. In addition, the doctor may need to tell the dietitian if you have diabetes so that we can arrange for appropriate meals. Different divisions of the Department also may share medical information about you in order to coordinate the different things you need. We also may disclose medical information about you to people outside the department for follow-up referral or per your written request.

For Payment. We may use and disclose medical information about you so that the treatment and services you receive here may be billed to and payment may be collected from you, an insurance company, or a third party. For example, we may need to give your health plan information about treatment you received at the clinic so your health plan will pay us or reimburse you.

For Health Care Operations. We may use and disclose medical information about you for quality control. These uses and disclosures are necessary to make sure that all of our patients receive quality care. For example, we may use medical information to review our treatment and services and to evaluate the performance of our staff in caring for you, or we or our designee may send you a patient satisfaction survey.

Appointment Reminders. We may use and disclose medical information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment for treatment or medical care.

Treatment Alternatives. We may use and disclose medical information to tell you about or recommend possible treatment options or alternatives that may be of interest to you.

Health-Related Benefits and Services. We may use and disclose medical information to tell you about health-related benefits, services, or medical education classes that may be of interest to you.

Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care. We may release medical information about you to a caregiver who may be a friend or family member. We may also give information to someone who helps pay for your care.

As Required By Law. We will disclose medical information about you when required to do so by federal, state, or local law.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Workers' Compensation. We may release medical information about you for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

Public Health Risks (Health and Safety to you and/or others). We may disclose medical information about you for public health activities. We may use and disclose medical information about you to agencies when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of the public or another person. These activities generally include the following:

To prevent or control disease, injury, or disability;

To report births and deaths;

To report child abuse or neglect;

To report reactions to medications or problems with products;

To notify people of recalls of products they may be using;

To notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition;

To notify the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. We will only make this disclosure when required or authorize

Lawsuits and Disputes. If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may disclose medical information about you in response to a court or administrative order. We may also disclose medical information about you in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute.

Law Enforcement. We may release medical information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official:

In response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons, or similar process;

To identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person;

About the victim of a crime, if, under certain limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement;

About a death we believe may be the result of criminal conduct;

About criminal conduct at the Department; and

In emergency circumstances to report a crime; the location of the crime or victims; or the identity, description or location of the person who committed the crime.

National Security and Intelligence Activities. We may release medical information about you to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law.

Protective Services for the President and Others. We may disclose medical information about you to authorized federal officials so they may provide protection to the President, or other authorized persons or foreign heads of state or conduct special.

Inmates. If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement official, we may release medical information about you to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be necessary (1) for the institution to provide you with health care; (2) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of others; or (3) for the safety and security of the correctional institution.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:

You have the following rights regarding medical information we maintain about you:

Right to Inspect and Copy. You have the right to inspect and copy medical information that may be used to make decisions about your care. Usually, this includes medical and billing records, but does not include psychotherapy notes.

To inspect and copy medical information that may be used to make decisions about you, contact the Department employee you have most recently been in contact with. You must submit your request in writing and may require a fee. Costs over \$5.00 may be requested to be pre-paid.

We may deny your request to inspect and copy in certain very limited circumstances. If you are denied access to medical information, you may request that the denial be reviewed. You may request to file a complaint through the Privacy Officer. The person conducting the review will not be the person who denied your request. We will comply with the outcome of the review.

Right to Amend. If you feel that medical information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. To request an amendment to your medical record, you should submit the request in writing, with the reason(s) supporting why you wish to amend your medical record to the Privacy Officer. Your statement will be made a part of your patient file.

Right to an Accounting of Disclosures. You have the right to request an “accounting of disclosures”. This is a list of the disclosures we made of medical information about you to others except for purposes of treatment, payment, and operations identified above. To request a list of accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to the Department employee you have most recently been in contact with. Your request must state a time period, which may not be longer than six years. Your request should indicate in what form you want the list (for example, on paper or electronically). The first list you request within a 12-month period will be free. For additional lists, we may charge you as shown above for the costs of providing the list. We will notify you of the cost involved, and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at that time before any costs are incurred.

Right to Request Restrictions. You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the medical information we use or disclose about you for treatment, payment, or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the medical information we disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member or friend.

We are not required to agree to your request. If we do agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you emergency treatment. To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to the Privacy Officer. In your request, you must tell us (1) what information you want to limit; (2) whether you want to limit our use, disclosure, or both; and (3) to whom you want the limits to apply, for example, disclosures to your spouse.

Right to Request Confidential Communications. You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you at work or by mail.

Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice. You have the right to a paper copy of this privacy notice. You may ask us to give you a copy of this privacy notice at any time by requesting a copy from any member of our staff.

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 medical information we already have about you, as well as any information we receive in the future. We will post a copy of the current notice. The notice will contain on the first page, in the top right-hand corner, the effective date. In addition, each time you register at or are admitted to our Department for treatment or health care services, we will offer you a copy of the current notice in effect.

COMPLAINTS

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may contact or submit your complaint in writing to the Client Rights Specialist of the Department. If we cannot resolve your concern, you also have the right to file a written complaint with the Secretary of the State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services.

The quality of your care will not be jeopardized nor will you be penalized for filing a complaint.

OTHER USES OF MEDICAL INFORMATION

Other uses and disclosures of medical information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written permission. If you provide us permission to use or disclose medical information about you, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, we will no longer use or disclose medical information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you.