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Notice of Privacy Practices

This notice describes how health information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. It is effective April 14, 2003, and applies to all protected health information contained in your health records maintained by us. We have the following duties regarding the maintenance, use and disclosure of your health records:

(1) We are required by law to maintain the privacy of the protected health information in your records and to provide you with this Notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to that information.

(2) We are required to abide by the terms of this Notice currently in effect.

(3) We reserve the right to change the terms of this Notice at any time, making the new provisions effective for all health information and records that we have and continue to maintain. All changes in this Notice will be prominently displayed and available at our office.

There are a number of **situations in which we may use or disclose** to other persons or entities your confidential health information. Certain uses and disclosures will require you to sign an acknowledgement that you received this Notice of Privacy Practices. These include treatment, payment, and health care operations. Any use or disclosure of your protected health information required for anything other than treatment, payment or health care operations requires you to sign an Authorization. Certain disclosures that are required by law, or under emergency circumstances, may be made without your Acknowledgement or Authorization. Under any circumstance, we will use or disclose only the minimum amount of information necessary from your medical records to accomplish the intended purpose of the disclosure.

Treatment: It may be necessary to share your health information with another health care provider whom we need to consult with respect to your care.

Payment: We may need to use or disclose information in your health record to obtain reimbursement from you, from your health-insurance carrier, or from another insurer for our services rendered to you.

Operations: Your health records may be used in our business planning and development operations, including improvements in our methods of operation, and general administrative functions. We may also use the information in our overall compliance planning, healthcare review activities, and arranging for legal and auditing functions.

There are certain circumstances under which we may use or disclose your health information **without first obtaining your Acknowledgement or Authorization**. Those circumstances generally involve public health and oversight activities, law-enforcement activities, judicial and administrative proceedings, and in the event of death. Specifically, we may be required to report to certain agencies information concerning certain communicable diseases, sexually transmitted diseases or HIV/AIDS status. We may also be required to report instances of suspected or documented abuse, neglect or domestic violence. We are required to report to appropriate agencies and law-enforcement officials information that you or another person is in immediate threat of danger to health or safety as a result of violent activity. We must also provide health information when ordered by a court of law to do so. We may contact you from time to time to provide appointment reminders or information about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you. You should be aware that we utilize an "open adjusting room" in which several people may be treated at the same time and in close proximity. We will try to speak quietly to you in a manner reasonably calculated to avoid disclosing your health information to others; however, complete privacy may not be possible in this setting.

Persons Involved in Your Healthcare: Unless you object, we may disclose to a member of your family, a relative, a close friend or any other person you identify, your protected health information that directly relates to that person's involvement in your health care. If you are unable to agree or object to such a disclosure, we may disclose such information as necessary if we determine that it is in your best interest based on our professional judgment. We may use or disclose protected health information to notify or assist in notifying a family member, personal representative or any other person that is responsible for your care of your location, general condition or death.