

**COMCARE
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PARTNERS**

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

As Required by the Privacy Regulations Created as a Result of the
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)

**THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU (AS A PATIENT
OF THIS PRACTICE) MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED, AND HOW YOU CAN GET
ACCESS TO YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION.**

PLEASE REVIEW THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY.

A. OUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR PRIVACY

Our practice is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your **protected health information (PHI)**. In conducting our business, we will create records regarding you and the treatment and services we provide to you. We are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of health information that identifies you. We also are required by law to provide you with this notice of our legal duties and the privacy practices that we maintain in our practice concerning your PHI. By federal and state law, we must follow the terms of the notice of privacy practices that we have in effect at the time.

We realize that these laws are complicated, but we must provide you with the following important information:

- How we may use and disclose your PHI.
- Your privacy rights in your PHI.
- Our obligations concerning the use and disclosure of your PHI.

The terms of this notice apply to all records containing your PHI that are created or retained by our practice. We reserve the right to revise or amend this Notice of Privacy Practices. Any revision or amendment to this notice will be effective for all of your records that our practice has created or maintained in the past, and for any of your records that we may create or maintain in the future. Our practice will post a copy of our current Notice in our offices in a visible location at all times, and you may request a copy of our most current Notice at any time.

B. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS NOTICE, PLEASE CONTACT:

COMCARE Privacy Officer 617 E. Elm Salina, KS 67401 785-825-8221

**C. WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION (PHI)
WITHOUT YOUR AUTHORIZATION:**

The following categories describe the different ways in which we may use and disclose your PHI.

1. Treatment. Our practice may use your PHI to treat you. For example, we may ask you to have laboratory tests (such as blood or urine tests), and we may use the results to help us reach a diagnosis. We might use your PHI in order to write a prescription for you, or we might disclose your PHI to a pharmacy when we order a prescription for you. Many of the people who work for our practice – including, but not limited to, our doctors and nurses – may use or disclose your PHI in order to treat you or to assist others in your treatment. Additionally, we may disclose your PHI to others who may assist in your care, such as your spouse, children or parents.

Finally, we may also disclose your PHI to other health care providers for purposes related to your treatment.

2. Payment. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI in order to bill and collect payment for the services and items you may receive from us. For example, we may contact your health insurer to certify that you are eligible for benefits (and for what range of benefits), and we may provide your insurer with details regarding your treatment to determine if your insurer will cover, or pay for, your treatment. We also may use and disclose your PHI to obtain payment from third parties that may be responsible for such costs,

such as family members. Also, we may use your PHI to bill you directly for services and items. We may disclose your PHI to other health care providers and entities to assist in their billing and collection efforts.

3. Health Care Operations. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to operate our business. As examples of the ways in which we may use and disclose your information for our operations, our practice may use your PHI to evaluate the quality of care you received from us, or to conduct cost-management and business planning activities for our practice. We may disclose your PHI to other health care providers and entities to assist in their health care operations.

4. Appointment Reminders. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to contact you and remind you of an appointment, including voice mail.

5. Health-Related Benefits and Services. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to inform you of health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

6. Release of Information to Family/Friends. Our practice may release your PHI to a friend or family member that is involved in your care, or who assists in taking care of you. We may also disclose your PHI to an organization assisting in a disaster relief effort so that your family can be notified about your condition, status, and location.

7. Disclosures Required By Law. Our practice will use and disclose your PHI when we are required to do so by federal, state or local law.

8. Public Health Risks. Our practice may disclose your PHI to public health authorities that are authorized by law to collect information for the purpose of:

- maintaining vital records, such as births and deaths
- reporting child abuse or neglect
- preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability
- notifying a person regarding potential exposure to a communicable disease
- notifying a person regarding a potential risk for spreading or contracting a disease or condition
- reporting reactions to drugs or problems with products or devices
- notifying individuals if a product or device they may be using has been recalled
- notifying appropriate government agency(ies) and authority(ies) regarding the potential abuse or neglect of an adult patient (including domestic violence); however, we will only disclose this information if the patient agrees or we are required or authorized by law to disclose this information
- notifying your employer under limited circumstances related primarily to workplace injury or illness or medical surveillance.
- if you agree, we can provide immunization information to schools.

9. Health Oversight Activities. Our practice may disclose your PHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. Oversight activities can include, for example, investigations, inspections, audits, surveys, licensure and disciplinary actions; civil, administrative, and criminal procedures or actions; or other activities necessary for the government to monitor government programs, compliance with civil rights laws and the health care system in general.

10. Lawsuits and Similar Proceedings. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI in response to a court or administrative order, if you are involved in a lawsuit or similar proceeding. We also may disclose your PHI in response to a discovery request, subpoena, or other lawful process by another party involved in the dispute, but only if we have made an effort to inform you of the request or to obtain an order protecting the information the party has requested.

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

- Regarding a crime victim in certain situations, if we are unable to obtain the person's agreement
- Concerning a death we believe has resulted from criminal conduct
- Regarding criminal conduct at our offices
- In response to a warrant, summons, court order or similar legal process
- To identify/locate a suspect, material witness, fugitive or missing person

- In an emergency, to report a crime (including the location or victim(s) of the crime, or the description, identity or location of the perpetrator)

12. Deceased Patients. Our practice may release PHI to a medical examiner or coroner to identify a deceased individual or to identify the cause of death. If necessary, we also may release information in order for funeral directors to perform their jobs.

13. Organ and Tissue Donation. Our practice may release your PHI to organizations that handle organ, eye or tissue procurement or transplantation, including organ donation banks, as necessary to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation if you are an organ donor.

14. Research. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI for research purposes in certain limited circumstances. Research projects are subject to a special approval process and before we use or disclose your PHI for research, the project will have been approved.

15. Serious Threats to Health or Safety. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI when necessary to reduce or prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of another individual or the public. Under these circumstances, we will only make disclosures to a person or organization able to help prevent the threat.

16. Military. Our practice may disclose your PHI if you are a member of U.S. or foreign military forces (including veterans) and if required by the appropriate authorities.

17. National Security. Our practice may disclose your PHI to federal officials for intelligence and national security activities authorized by law.

18. Protective Services for the President and Others. We also may disclose your PHI to federal officials in order to protect the President, other officials or foreign heads of state, or to conduct investigations.

19. Inmates. Our practice may disclose your PHI to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials if you are an inmate or under the custody of a law enforcement official. Disclosure for these purposes would be necessary: (a) for the institution to provide health care services to you, (b) for the safety and security of the institution, and/or (c) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of other individuals.

20. Workers' Compensation. Our practice may release your PHI for workers' compensation and similar programs.

21. Employers. We may provide your PHI to your employer if we provide health care services to you at the request of your employer. These services are related to an evaluation for medical surveillance of the workplace or to evaluate whether you have a work-related illness or injury.

22. Surveys. We may use and disclose your PHI to contact you to evaluate your satisfaction with our services provided.

23. Fundraising. We may send you information or contact you as part of our fundraising activities. You have the right to opt out of receiving this type of communication.

E. YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR PHI (protected health information)

You have the following rights regarding the PHI that we maintain about you:

1. Confidential Communications. You have the right to request that our practice communicate with you about your health and related issues in a particular manner or at a certain location. For instance, you may ask that we contact you at home, rather than work. In order to request a type of confidential communication, you must make a written request to **COMCARE Privacy Officer, 617 E. Elm, Salina, Kansas 67401** specifying the requested method of contact, or the location where you wish to be contacted. Our practice will accommodate **reasonable** requests. You do not need to give a reason for your request.

2. Requesting Restrictions. You have the right to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI for treatment, payment or health care operations. Additionally, you have the right to request that we restrict our disclosure of your PHI to only certain individuals involved in your care or the payment for your care, such as family members and friends. **We are not required to agree to your request;** however, if we do agree, we are bound by our agreement except when otherwise required by law, in emergencies, or when the information is necessary to treat you. In order to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI, you must make your request in writing to **COMCARE Privacy Officer, 617 E. Elm, Salina, Kansas 67401, 785-825-8221.** Your request must describe in a clear and concise fashion:

- (a) the information you wish restricted;
- (b) whether you are requesting to limit our practice's use, disclosure or both; and
- (c) to whom you want the limits to apply.

3. Inspection and Copies. You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of the PHI that may be used to make decisions about you, including patient medical records and billing records, but not including psychotherapy notes. You must submit your request in writing to **COMCARE Privacy Officer, 617 E. Elm, Salina, Kansas 67401** in order to inspect and/or obtain a copy of your PHI. Our practice may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing, labor and supplies associated with your request. Our practice may deny your request to inspect and/or copy in certain limited circumstances; however, you may request a review of our denial. Another licensed health care professional chosen by us will conduct reviews.

4. Amendment. You may ask us to amend your health information if you believe it is incorrect or incomplete, and you may request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for our practice. To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to **COMCARE Privacy Officer, 617 E. Elm, Salina, Kansas 67401.** You must provide us with a reason that supports your request for amendment. Our practice will deny your request if you fail to submit your request (and the reason supporting your request) in writing. Also, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that is in our opinion: (a) accurate and complete; (b) not part of the PHI kept by or for the practice; (c) not part of the PHI which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or (d) not created by our practice, unless the individual or entity that created the information is not available to amend the information.

5. Accounting of Disclosures. All of our patients have the right to request an "accounting of disclosures." An "accounting of disclosures" is a list of certain non-routine disclosures our practice has made of your PHI for non-treatment, non-payment or non-operations purposes. Use of your PHI as part of the routine patient care in our practice is not required to be documented. For example, the doctor sharing information with the nurse; or the billing department using your information to file your insurance claim. In order to obtain an accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to **COMCARE Privacy Officer, 617 E. Elm, Salina, Kansas 67401.** All requests for an "accounting of disclosures" must state a time period, which may not be longer than six (6) years from the date of disclosure and may not include dates before April 14, 2003. The first list you request within a 12-month period is free of charge, but our practice may charge you for additional lists within the same 12-month period. Our practice will notify you of the costs involved with additional requests, and you may withdraw your request before you incur any costs.

6. Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice. You are entitled to receive a paper copy of our notice of privacy practices. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. To obtain a paper copy of this notice, contact **COMCARE Privacy Officer, 617 E. Elm, Salina, Kansas 67401, 784-825-8221.**

7. Right to File a Complaint. If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our practice or with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Office for Civil Rights (Regional Office at Kansas City), 601 East 12th Street Room 248, Kansas City, MO 64106, 816.426.7277, or through www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/index.html. To file a complaint with our practice, contact **COMCARE Privacy Officer, 617 E. Elm, Salina, Kansas 67401, 784-825-8221.** All complaints must be submitted in writing. **You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.**

8. Right to Provide an Authorization for Other Uses and Disclosures. Our practice will obtain your written authorization for uses and disclosures that are not identified by this notice or permitted by applicable law. Any authorization you provide to us regarding the use and disclosure of your PHI may be revoked at any time in writing. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your PHI for the reasons described in the authorization. Please note, we are required to retain records of your care.

9. Breach Notification. You have the right to be notified if we determine that there has been a breach of your PHI.

10. Rights Regarding Electronic Health Information Exchange. COMCARE participates in electronic health information exchange, or HIE. New technology allows a provider or a health plan to make a single request through a health information organization, or HIO, to obtain electronic records for a specific patient from other HIE participants for purposes of treatment, payment, or health care operations. HIOs are required to use appropriate safeguards to prevent unauthorized uses and disclosures.

You have two options with respect to HIE. First, you may permit authorized individuals to access your electronic health information through an HIO. If you choose this option, you do not have to do anything.

Second, you may restrict access to all of your information through an HIO (except access by properly authorized individuals as needed to report specific information as required by law). If you wish to restrict access, you must complete and submit a specific form available at <http://www.khie.org>. You cannot restrict access to certain information only; your choice is to permit or restrict access to all of your information.

If you have questions regarding HIE or HIOs, please visit <http://www.khie.org> for additional information.

Even if you restrict access through an HIO, providers and health plans may share your information directly through other means (e.g., facsimile or secure e-mail) without your specific written authorization.

If you receive health care services in a state other than Kansas, different rules may apply regarding restrictions on access to your electronic health information. Please communicate directly with your out- of-state health care provider regarding those rules.

F. CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE:

We have the right to change this Notice at any time. We have the right to make the revised Notice effective for PHI that we currently have as well and any PHI we receive, use or disclose in the future. We will post a current copy of our Notice in the facility.