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Notice of Privacy Practices for Protected Health Information and Client Rights & Responsibilities

Effective Date: May 27, 2017

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information.

The office is permitted by federal privacy laws to make uses and disclosures of your health information for purposes of treatment, payment, and health care operations. Protected health information is the information we create and obtain in providing our services to you. Such information may include documenting your symptoms, examination, and test results, diagnoses, treatment, and applying for future care or treatment. It also includes billing documents for those services.

Examples of Uses of Your Health Information for Treatment Purposes are:

- A therapist obtains treatment information about you and records it in a health record.
- During the course of your treatment, the therapist determines he/she will need to consult with another specialist in the area. He/she will share the information with such specialist and obtain his/her input.

Example of Use of Your Health Information for Payment Purposes:

- We submit requests for payment to your health insurance company. The health insurance company (or other business associate helping us obtain payment) requests information from us regarding medical care given. We will provide information to them about you and the care given.

Example of Use of Your Information for Health Care Operations:

- We obtain services from our insurers or other business associates such as quality assessment, quality improvement, outcome evaluation, protocol and clinical guideline development, training programs, credentialing, medical review, legal services, and insurance. We will share information about you with such insurers or other business associates as necessary to obtain these services.

Our Responsibilities

The office is required to:

- Maintain the privacy of your health information as required by law;
- Provide you with a notice as to our duties and privacy practices as to the information we collect and maintain about you;
- Abide by the terms of this Notice;
- Notify you if we cannot accommodate a requested restriction or request; and,
- Accommodate your reasonable requests regarding methods to communicate health information with you.

We reserve the right to amend, change, or eliminate provisions in our privacy practices and access practices and to enact new provisions regarding the protected health information we maintain. If our information practices change, we will amend our Notice. You are entitled to receive a revised copy of the Notice by calling and requesting a copy of our "Notice" or by visiting our office and picking up a copy.

Other Disclosures and Uses Communication With Family

Using our best judgment, we may disclose to a family member, other relative, close personal friend, or any other person you identify, health information relevant to that person's involvement in your care or in payment for such care, if you do not object, or in an emergency.

Notification

Unless you object, we may use or disclose your protected health information to notify, or assist in notifying, a family member, personal representative, or other person responsible for your care, about your location, and about your general condition, or your death.

Research

We may disclose information to researchers when their research has been approved by an institutional review board that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your protected health information.

Disaster Relief

We may use and disclose your protected health information to assist in disaster relief efforts.

Workers Compensation

If you are seeking compensation through Workers Compensation, we may disclose your protected health information to the extent necessary to comply with laws relating to Workers Compensation.

Public Health

As authorized by law, we may disclose your protected health information to public health or legal authorities charged with preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability; to report reactions to medications or problems with products; to notify people of recalls; to notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or who is at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition.

Abuse & Neglect

We may disclose your protected health information to public authorities as allowed by law to report abuse or neglect.

Employers

We may release health information about you to your employer if we provide health care services to you at the request of your employer, and the health care services are provided either to conduct an evaluation relating to medical surveillance of the workplace or to evaluate whether you have a work-related illness or injury. In such circumstances, we will give you written notice of such release of information to your employer. Any other disclosures to your employer will be made only if you execute a specific authorization for the release of that information to your employer.

Law Enforcement

We may disclose your protected health information for law enforcement purposes as required by law, such as when required by a court order, or in cases involving felony prosecution, or to the extent an individual is in the custody of law enforcement.

Health Oversight

Federal law allows us to release your protected health information to appropriate health oversight agencies or for health oversight activities.

Judicial/Administrative Proceedings

We may disclose your protected health information in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding as allowed or required by law, with your authorization, or as directed by a proper court order.

Serious Threat

To avert a serious threat to health or safety, we may disclose your protected health information consistent with applicable law to prevent or lessen a serious, imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public.

For Specialized Governmental Functions

We may disclose your protected health information for specialized government functions as authorized by law such as to Armed Forces personnel, for national security purposes, or to public assistance program personnel.

Client's Rights and Responsibilities

No person shall be denied access to available and medically indicated treatment or accommodations on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, creed, national origin, physical or mental disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or source of payment for care.

Each client (or medical decision-maker where applicable) has the following rights:

Rights to Information

Each client or medical decision-maker has the right to receive information in a manner he/she can understand about:

- Client rights at the time of initiation of services
- Name and specialty of all therapists participating in the case
- Nature and extent of the diagnosis, the planned course of treatment, and outcomes
- Details necessary to give informed consent before a procedure or treatment
- Office rules and regulations as they apply to clients and parents
- How to resolve complaints concerning the quality of care or service

Rights Related to Care

While in the office, each client or medical decision-maker has the right to:

- Participate in care in an informed manner and make decisions about therapy planning through discussion with his/her therapist
- Refuse treatment to the extent permitted by law and be informed of the medical consequences of this action
- Regard participation in data-gathering for research as voluntary and feel free to refuse to participate without compromising access to current or future care
- Safeguard his/her right to personal privacy
- Maintain confidentiality of personal health information
- Receive care in a safe environment, to the extent the office can control that environment
- Expect that the office will respond to a request for services in a reasonable manner

- Receive considerate care that respects the client's personal values and beliefs
- Examine and receive an explanation of the office bill, regardless of payment source
- Expect reasonable continuity of care and be informed of continuing healthcare requirements following discharge

Rights of Recourse

Each client or medical decision-maker has the right to:

- Participate in discussion of ethical issues relating to care.
- Receive information on how to resolve complaints about quality of care or service through the following Speech Emporium process:
 - Speak with your child's therapist or supervising therapist, who will attempt to resolve the issue to your satisfaction.
 - If the complaint cannot be resolved promptly, call the office manager at 832-593-6767. An owner will make contact to explore further if satisfaction can be achieved. Know that presentation of a complaint or grievance will not compromise current care or future access to care.
 - If a complaint cannot be resolved to your satisfaction, you have the right to file a formal, written grievance with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS).
Texas Department of State Health Services
1100 W. 49th St.
Austin TX, 78756-3199
800-973-0022
800-735-2989 (TDD)
 - Medicare clients have the right to contact the Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) in the state of Texas:
TMF Health Quality Institute
Review and Compliance
Bridgepoint I, Suite 300
5918 West Courtyard Dr.
Austin, TX 78730-5036
1-800-725-8315 or 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)

Client Responsibilities

Proper client care depends on the acceptance of certain responsibilities. The client or the medical decision-maker has the responsibility to:

- Provide accurate and complete information about his/her health and report changes in his/her condition or perceived risks in care
- Ask questions when he/she does not understand what he/she has been told about care or what he/she is expected to do
- Follow the prescribed treatment plan and report to the therapist any side effects. If the client refuses treatment or fails to follow the directions of his/her therapist, he/she will be responsible for his/her actions
- Assure that the financial obligations of his/her therapy are fulfilled
- Follow the office rules, and be considerate of the rights of others at the office, such as assisting in the control of noise, smoking, and number of visitors