

This Notice describes how health information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. This Notice provides you with information to protect the privacy of your confidential health care information, hereafter referred to as protected health information (PHI). The Notice also describes the privacy rights you have and how you can exercise those rights. Please review it carefully.

If you have any questions about this Notice, please contact Hamilton County Employee Benefits at benefits@hamilton-co.org or 513-946-4700 or 138 E. Court Street, Room 707, Cincinnati, OH 45202

1. OUR COMMITMENT REGARDING YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION

Hamilton County is committed to maintaining and protecting the confidentiality of our employees' personal information. This Notice of Privacy Practices applies to Hamilton County health plans, collectively, The Plans. The Plans are required by federal and state law to protect the privacy of your individually identifiable health information and other personal information. We are required to provide you with this Notice about our policies, safeguards and practices. When the Plans use or disclose your PHI, the Plans are bound by the terms of this Notice, or the revised Notice, if applicable.

2. HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

The following describes the ways Hamilton County may use and disclose health information that identifies you. Except for the purposes written below, we will use and disclose Health Information only with your written permission. You may revoke such permission at any time by contacting the Privacy Officer.

- **For Payment.** We may use and disclose PHI about you so that the treatment and services you receive at the hospital may be paid out of the Plan.
- **For Treatment.** The Plans may disclose your PHI, or your covered dependents' PHI, to a health care provider or administrator for its provision, coordination or management of your health care and related services. For example, prior to providing a health service to you, your doctor may ask the Plans for information concerning whether and when the service was previously provided to you. The Plan may use and disclose your PHI for treatment activities of a health care provider.
- **For Health Care Operations.** The Plans may use and disclose your PHI for our health care operations, or the health care operations of a third-party administrator of the plans. For example, the Plans may use PHI to conduct quality assessment and improvement activities. Other health care operations may include providing appointment reminders or sending you information about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services. The Plans may also disclose your PHI to another health plan or provider who has a relationship with you, so that it can conduct quality assessment and improvement activities — for example, to perform case management.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS:

- **As Required by Law.** We will disclose Health Information when required to do so by international, federal, state or local law.
- **To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety.** We may use and disclose Health Information when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of the public or another person. Disclosures, however, will be made only to someone who may be able to help prevent the threat.
- **Business Associates.** We may disclose Health Information to our business associates that perform functions on our behalf or provide us with services if the information is necessary for such functions or services. For example, we may use another company to perform billing services on our behalf. All of our business associates are obligated to protect the privacy of your information and are not allowed to use or disclose any information other than as specified in our contract.

- **Organ and Tissue Donation.** If you are an organ donor, we may use or release Health Information to organizations that handle organ procurement or other entities engaged in procurement, banking or transportation of organs, eyes or tissues to facilitate organ, eye or tissue donation and transplantation.
- **Military and Veterans.** If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release Health Information as required by military command authorities. We also may release Health Information to the appropriate foreign military authority if you are a member of a foreign military.
- **Workers' Compensation.** We may release Health Information for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.
- **Public Health Risks.** We may disclose Health Information for public health activities. These activities generally include disclosures to prevent or control disease, injury or disability; report births and deaths; report child abuse or neglect; report reactions to medications or problems with products; notify people of recalls of products they may be using; a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition; and 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 if you agree or when required or authorized by law.
- **Health Oversight Activities.** We may disclose Health Information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights laws.
- **Data Breach Notification Purposes.** We may use or disclose your Protected Health Information to provide legally required notices of unauthorized access to or disclosure of your health information.
- **Lawsuits and Disputes.** If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may disclose Health Information in response to a court or administrative order. We also may disclose Health Information in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.
- **Law Enforcement.** We may release Health Information if asked by a law enforcement official if the information is: (1) in response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons or similar process; (2) limited information to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person; (3) about the victim of a crime even if, under certain very limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement; (4) about a death we believe may be the result of criminal conduct; (5) about criminal conduct on our premises; and (6) in an emergency to report a crime, the location of the crime or victims, or the identity, description or location of the person who committed the crime.
- **Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors.** We may release Health Information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death. We also may release Health Information to funeral directors as necessary for their duties.
- **National Security and Intelligence Activities.** We may release Health Information to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counter-intelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law.
- **Protective Services for the President and Others.** We may disclose Health Information to authorized federal officials so they may provide protection to the President, other authorized persons or foreign heads of state or to conduct special investigations.
- **Inmates or Individuals in Custody.** If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement official, we may release Health Information to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be if 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) the safety and security of the correctional institution.

USES AND DISCLOSURES THAT REQUIRE US TO GIVE YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT AND OPT

- **Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care.** 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.
- **Disaster Relief.** We may disclose your Protected Health Information to disaster relief organizations that seek your Protected Health Information to coordinate your care, or notify family and friends of your location or condition in a disaster. We will provide you with an opportunity to agree or object to such a disclosure whenever we practically can do so.

YOUR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION IS REQUIRED FOR OTHER USES AND DISCLOSURES

- Uses and disclosures of Protected Health Information for marketing purposes; and
- Disclosures that constitute a sale of your Protected Health Information

Other uses and disclosures of Protected Health Information not covered by this Notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written authorization. If you do give us an authorization, you may revoke it at any time by submitting a written revocation to our Privacy Officer and we will no longer disclose Protected Health Information under the authorization. But disclosure that we made in reliance on your authorization before you revoked it will not be affected by the revocation.

3. YOUR RIGHTS:

You have the following rights regarding Health Information we have about you:

- **Right to Inspect and Copy.** You have a right to inspect and copy Health Information in certain records the Plan maintains. This includes medical and billing records, other than psychotherapy notes. To inspect and copy this Health Information, you must make your request, in writing, to Hamilton County Human Resources, 138 E. Court Street, Room 707, Cincinnati, OH 45202. We have up to 30 days to make your Protected Health Information available to you and we may charge you a reasonable fee for the costs of copying, mailing or other supplies associated with your request. We may not charge you a fee if you need the information for a claim for benefits under the Social Security Act or any other state or federal needs-based benefit program. We may deny your request in certain limited circumstances.
- **Right to an Electronic Copy of Electronic Medical Records.** If your Protected Health Information is maintained in an electronic format (known as an electronic medical record or an electronic health record), you have the right to request that an electronic copy of your record be given to you or transmitted to another individual or entity. We will make every effort to provide access to your Protected Health Information in the form or format you request, if it is readily producible in such form or format. If the Protected Health Information is not readily producible in the form or format you request your record will be provided in either our standard electronic format or if you do not want this form or format, a readable hard copy form. We may charge you a reasonable, cost-based fee for the labor associated with transmitting the electronic medical record.
- **Right to Get Notice of a Breach.** You have the right to be notified upon a breach of any of your unsecured Protected Health Information.
- **Right to Amend.** If you feel that Health Information we have is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for our office. To request an amendment, you must make your request, in writing, to Hamilton County Human Resources, 138 E. Court Street, Room 707, Cincinnati, OH 45202.

- **Right to an Accounting of Disclosures.** You have the right to request a list of certain disclosures we made of Health Information for purposes other than treatment, payment and health care operations or for which you provided written authorization. To request an accounting of disclosures, you must make your request, in writing, to Hamilton County Human Resources, 138 E. Court Street, Room 707, Cincinnati, OH 45202.
- **Right to Request Restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the Health Information we use or disclose for treatment, payment, or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the Health Information we disclose to someone involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member or friend. For example, you could ask that we not share information about a particular diagnosis or treatment with your spouse. To request a restriction, you must make your request, in writing, to Hamilton County Human Resources, 138 E. Court Street, Room 707, Cincinnati, OH 45202. We are not required to agree to your request unless you are asking us to restrict the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information to a health plan for payment or health care operation purposes and such information you wish to restrict pertains solely to a health care item or service for which you have paid us "out-of-pocket" in full. If we agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you with emergency treatment.
- **Out-of-Pocket-Payments.** If you paid out-of-pocket (or in other words, you have requested that we not bill your health plan) in full for a specific item or service, you have the right to ask that your Protected Health Information with respect to that item or service not be disclosed to a health plan for purposes of payment or health care operations, and we will honor that request.
- **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 by mail or at work. To request confidential communications, you must make your request, in writing, to Hamilton County Human Resources, 138 E. Court Street, Room 707, Cincinnati, OH 45202. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted. We will accommodate reasonable requests.
- **Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice.** You have the right to a paper copy of this notice. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. Even if you have agreed to receive this notice electronically, you are still entitled to a paper copy of this notice. You may obtain a copy of this notice at our web site, www.hamilton-co.org. To obtain a paper copy of this notice, you must make your request, in writing, to Hamilton County Human Resources, 138 E. Court Street, Room 707, Cincinnati, OH 45202.

4. CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE:

We reserve the right to change this notice and make the new notice apply to Health Information we already have as well as any information we receive in the future. If this Notice is modified, it will be made available to you. The notice will contain the effective date on the first page, in the top right-hand corner.

5. FOR MORE INFORMATION OR COMPLAINTS:

If you want more information about your privacy rights, do not understand your privacy rights, are concerned your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our office. You may also file written complaints with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. All complaints must be made in writing. **You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.**

You may contact our office at: Hamilton County, Human Resources Department, 138 E. Court Street, Room 707, Cincinnati, OH 45202 or 513-946-4700.

The Plans may change the terms of this Notice at any time. If the Plans change this Notice, the Plans may make the new Notice terms effective for all of your PHI that the Plans maintain, including any information the Plans created or received before we issued the new Notice. If the Plans change this Notice, the Plans will make it available to you.