

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. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

State and Federal laws require us to maintain the privacy of your health information and to inform you about our privacy practices by providing you with this Notice. We must follow the privacy practices as described below. This Notice will take effect on 12/1/2013 and will remain in effect until it is amended or replaced by us.

It is our right to change our privacy practices provided law permits the changes. Before we make a significant change, this Notice will be amended to reflect the changes and we will make the new Notice available upon request. We reserve the right to make any changes in our privacy practices and the new terms of our Notice effective for all health information maintained, created and/or received by us before the date changes were made.

You may request a copy of our Privacy Notice at any time by contacting our Privacy Officer, Joseph R. Loftus. Information on contacting us can be found at the end of this Notice.

TYPICAL USES AND DISCLOSURES OF HEALTH INFORMATION

We will keep your health information confidential, using it only for the following purposes:

Treatment: We may use your protected health information (PHI) including electronic protected health information (ePHI) to provide you with our professional services which may include electronic disclosure. We have established “minimum necessary” or “need to know” standards that limit various staff members’ access to your health information according to their primary job functions. Everyone on our staff is required to sign a confidentiality statement.

Disclosure: We may disclose and/or share protected health information (PHI) including electronic disclosure with other health care professionals who provide treatment and/or service to you. These professionals will have a privacy and confidentiality policy like this one. Health information about you may also be disclosed to your family, friends and/or other persons you choose to involve in your care, only if you agree that we may do so.

(a) Right to an Accounting of Disclosures: You have the right to request an “accounting of disclosures” of your protected information if the disclosure was made for purposes other than providing services, payment, and or business operations. In light of the increasing use of Electronic Medical Record technology (EMR), the HITECH Act allows you the right to request a copy of your health information in electronic form if we store your health information electronically. Disclosures can be made available for a period of 6 years prior to your request and for electronic health information 3 years prior to the date on which the accounting is requested. To request this list or accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to our Privacy Officer. Lists, if requested, will be according to our actual costs as required by Texas law. You may request an electronic copy of your patient records. Please contact our Privacy Officer for a fee and/or for an explanation of our fee structure.

(b) Right to Request Restriction of PHI: You may request a restriction on our use and disclosure of PHI, but we are not required to agree to your request. The HITECH Act restricts provider’s refusal of an individual’s request not to disclose PHI in instances where the disclosure is to a health plan for purposes of carrying out payment or health operations (and is not for purposes of carrying out treatment); and the PHI pertains solely to a healthcare item or service for which our facility has been paid out of pocket in full.

Payment: We may use and disclose your PHI and ePHI to seek payment for services we provide to you. This disclosure involves our business office staff and may include insurance organizations or other businesses that may become involved in the process of mailing statements and/or collecting unpaid balances.

Emergencies: We may use or disclose your health information to notify, or assist in the notification of a family member or anyone responsible for your care, in case of any emergency involving your care, your location, your general condition or death. If at all possible we will provide you with an opportunity to object to this use or disclosure. Under emergency conditions or if you are incapacitated we will use our professional judgment to disclose only that information directly relevant to your care. We will also use our professional judgment to make reasonable inferences of your best interest by allowing someone to pick up filled prescriptions, x-rays or other similar forms of health information and/or supplies unless you have advised us otherwise.

Healthcare Operations: We will use and disclose your health information to keep our practice operable. Examples of personnel who may have access to this information include, but are not limited to, our medical records staff, outside health or management reviewers and individuals performing similar activities.

To You Or Your Personal Representative: We must disclose your health information to you, as described in the Patient Rights section of this Notice. We may disclose your health information to your personal representative, but only if you agree that we may do so.

Persons Involved In Care: We may use or disclose health information to notify, or assist in the notification of (including identifying or locating) a family member, your personal representative or another person responsible for your care, of your location, your general condition, or death. If you are present, then prior to use or disclosure of your health information, we will provide you with an opportunity to object to such uses or disclosures. In the event of your absence or incapacity or in emergency circumstances, we will disclose health information based on a determination using our professional judgment disclosing only health information that is directly relevant to the person's involvement in your healthcare. We will also use our professional judgment and our experience with common practice to make reasonable inferences of your best interest in allowing a person to pick up filled prescriptions, medical supplies, x-rays, or other similar forms of health information.

Required by Law: We may use or disclose your health information when we are required to do so by law. (Court or administrative orders, subpoena, discovery request or other lawful process) We will use and disclose your information when requested by national security, intelligence and other State and Federal officials and/or if you are an inmate or otherwise under the custody of law enforcement.

Abuse or Neglect: We may disclose your health information to appropriate authorities if we reasonably believe that you are a possible victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence or the possible victim of other crimes. This information will be disclosed only to the extent necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health or safety or that of others.

Public Health Responsibilities: We will disclose your health care information to report problems with products, reactions to medications, product recalls, disease/infection exposure and to prevent and control disease, injury and/or disability.

Marketing Health-Related Services and Fundraising Communications: We will not use your health information for marketing or fundraising purposes unless we have your written authorization to do so.

National Security: The health information of Armed Forces personnel may be disclosed to military authorities under certain circumstances. If the information is required for lawful intelligence, counterintelligence or other national security activities, we may disclose it to authorized federal officials.

Appointment Reminders: We may use or disclose your health information to provide you with appointment reminders, including, but not limited to, voicemail messages, postcards or letters.

YOUR PRIVACY RIGHTS AS OUR PATIENT

Access: Upon written request, you have the right to inspect and get electronic copies of your health information (and that of an individual for whom you are a legal guardian.) There will be some limited exceptions. If you wish to examine your health information, you will need to complete and submit an appropriate request form. Contact our Privacy Officer for a copy of the Request Form. You may also request access by sending us a letter to the address at the end of this Notice. Once approved, an appointment can be made to review your records. Copies, if requested, will be billed according to our actual costs as allowed by law. If you want the copies mailed to you, postage will also be charged. If you prefer a summary or an explanation of your health information, we will provide it for a fee. Please contact our Privacy Officer for a fee and/or for an explanation of our fee structure. Patient records are maintained electronically and, as required by law, they will be made available electronically, if so requested.

Amendment: You have the right to amend your healthcare information, if you feel it is inaccurate or incomplete. Your request must be in writing and must include an explanation of why the information should be amended. Under certain circumstances, your request may be denied.

Non-routine Disclosures: You have the right to request and receive an accounting of certain non-routine disclosures of your identifiable health information. We are required to maintain a log of these non-routine disclosures for a period of no less than six years beginning April 14, 2003. You can request non-routine disclosures going back 6 years starting on April 14, 2003.

Restrictions: You have the right to request that we place additional restrictions on our use or disclosure of your health information. We will abide by our agreement (Except in emergencies). Please contact our Privacy Officer if you want to further restrict access to your health care information. This request must be submitted in writing.

Breach Notification Requirements: Beginning September 23, 2009, in the event unsecured protected information about you is "breached" and the use of the information poses a significant risk of financial, reputable or other harm to you, we will notify you of the situation and any steps you should take to protect yourself against harm due to the breach. We will inform HHS and take any other steps required by law.

QUESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

You have the right to file a complaint with us if you feel we have not complied with our Privacy Policies. Your complaint should be directed to our Privacy Officer. If you feel we may have violated your privacy rights, or if you disagree with a decision we made regarding your access to your health information, you can complain to us in writing. Request a Complaint Form from our Privacy Officer. We support your right to the privacy of your information and will not retaliate in any way if you choose to file a complaint with us or with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

HOW TO CONTACT US

Practice Name: Joseph R. Loftus, D.D.S.
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