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NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND/OR DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

We respect our legal obligation to keep health information that identifies you private. We are obligated by law to give you notice of our privacy practices. This notice describes how we protect your health information and what rights you have regarding it.

TREATMENT, PAYMENT, AND HEALTH CARE OPERATIONS

The most common reason why we use and/or disclose your health information is for treatment, payment or health care operations. Examples of how we use and/or disclose information for treatment purposes are: setting up an appointment for you; confirming an appointment for you; testing; calling and/or contacting you regarding test results; examination; prescribing medication; phoning or faxing prescriptions to be filled; referring you to another doctor or clinic or hospital for care or services; getting copies of your health information from another professional that you may have seen before us. Examples of how we use and/or disclose your health information for payment purposes are: asking you about your health care plans, or other sources of payment; preparing and sending bills or claims to you and/or your health care plan; preparing and sending bills or claims to our billing service; preparing and sending bills or claims to our collection agency; and collecting unpaid amounts (either ourselves or through a collection agency or attorney). "Health care operations" means those administrative and managerial functions that we have to do in order to run our office. Examples of how we use and/or disclose your health information for health care operations are: financial or billing audits, internal quality assurance; personnel decisions; participation in managed care plans; defense of legal matters; business planning; and outside storage of our records. We routinely use your health information inside our office for these purposes without any special permission. If we need to disclose your health information outside of our office for these reasons, we will not ask you for special written permission.

USES AND DISCLOSURES FOR OTHER REASONS WITHOUT PERMISSION

In some limited situations, the law allows or requires us to use and/or disclose your health information without your permission. Not all of these situations will apply; some may never come up at our office at all. Such uses or disclosures are:

- when a state or federal law mandates that certain health information be reported for a specific purpose;
- for public health purposes, such as contagious disease reporting, investigation or surveillance; and notices to and from the federal Food and Drug Administration regarding drugs or medical devices;
- disclosures to government authorities about victims of suspected abuse, neglect or domestic violence;
- uses and disclosures for health oversight activities, such as for the licensing of doctors; for audits by Medicare or Medicaid; or for investigation of possible violations of health care laws;
- disclosures for judicial and administrative proceedings, such as in response to subpoenas or orders of courts or administrative agencies;
- disclosures for law enforcement purposes, such as to provide information about someone who is or is suspected to be a victim of a crime; to provide information about a crime at our office; or to report a crime that happened somewhere else;
- disclosures to a medical examiner to identify a dead person or to determine the cause of death; or to funeral directors to aid in burial; or to organizations that handle organ or tissue donations;
- uses or disclosures for health related research;
- uses and disclosures to prevent a serious threat to health or safety;
- uses or disclosures for specialized government functions, such as for the protection of the president or high ranking government officials; for lawful national intelligence activities; for military purposes; or for the evaluation and health of members of the foreign service;
- disclosure of de-identified information;
- disclosures relating to worker's compensation programs;
- disclosures of a "limited data set" for research, public health or health care operations;
- disclosures to "business associates" who perform health care operations for us and who commit to respect the privacy of your health information
- other uses and disclosures affected by state law