

Cristen D. Whitmer, DDS

Notice of Privacy Policy

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.

The privacy of your health information is important to us.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) requires that health providers keep your medical and dental information private. The HIPAA Privacy Rule states that health providers must also post in a clear and prominent location, and provide patients with, a written Notice of Privacy Policy.

The privacy practices described are currently in effect. We reserve the right to change our privacy practices, and the terms of this Notice at any time, provided such changes are permitted by applicable law. We reserve the right to make the changes in our privacy practices and the new terms of our Notice effective for all health information that we maintain, including health information we created or received before we made the changes. You may request a copy of our Notice at any time. Additional information may be obtained from the HIPAA Coordinator listed in our written HIPAA Plan.

USES AND DISCLOSURES OF HEALTH INFORMATION

The following describes how information about you may be used in this dental office:

- **Treatment Services:** We may use or disclose your health information to all of our team members, other dentists, your physicians, or other healthcare provider providing treatment to you.
- **Payment and Health Care Operations:** We may use and disclose your health information to obtain payment for services we provide to you, to participate in quality assurance, disease management, training, licensing, and certification programs. Upon your request, we will not disclose to your health insurer any services paid by you out of pocket.
- **Marketing Health-Related Services/Fundraising:** We will not use your health information for marketing communications without your written authorization. You can opt out of receiving information about our marketing or fundraisers. We will not sell your health information without your explicit authorization.
- **Appointment Reminders:** We may use or disclose your health information to provide you with appointment reminders (such as voicemail messages, postcards, or letters).
- **Required By Law:** We may disclose your health information when we are required to do so by law.
- **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. We may disclose your health information to the extent necessary to avert a serious threat to your health or safety or the health or safety of others.
- **National Security:** We may disclose to military authorities the health information of Armed Forces personnel under certain circumstances. We may disclose to authorized federal officials health information required for lawful intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security activities. We may disclose to correctional institution or law enforcement official having lawful custody of protected health information of inmate or patient under certain circumstances.
- **Family Members, Friends, and Others Involved in Care:** At your request, we may disclose your health information to a family member or other person if necessary to assist with your treatment and/or payment for services. Based on our judgment and as per 164.522(a) of HIPAA, we may disclose your information to these persons in the event of your incapacity or emergency circumstances. 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.
- **Business Associates:** Some services in our organization are provided through contacts with business associates. Examples include practice management software representatives, accountants, answering service personnel, etc. When these services are contracted, we may disclose your health information to our business associates so that they can perform the job we have asked them to do and bill you or your third-party payer for services rendered. All of our business associates are required to safeguard your information and to follow HIPAA Privacy Rules.
- **Worker's Compensation:** We may release medical information about you for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses.
- **Research:** We may disclose medical information to researchers when an institution's review board or special privacy board has reviewed the proposed study and established protocols to ensure the privacy of the health information in their research and determined that the researcher does not need to obtain your authorization prior to using your medical information for research purposes.
- **Public Health Activities:** We may disclose medical information for public health activities, to include the following: to prevent or control disease, injury, or disability; to report reactions with medications or problems with products, to notify people of recalls of products they may be using; to notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or who may be at

risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition; to notify the proper government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence (when required by law).

- **Other Authorizations:** In addition to our use of your health information for treatment, payment, or healthcare operations, you may give us written authorization to use your health information or to disclose it to anyone for any purpose. If you give us an authorization, you may revoke it in writing at any time. Your revocation will not affect any use or disclosures permitted by your authorization while it was in effect. Unless you give us a written authorization, we cannot use or disclose your health information for any reason except those described in this Notice.
- **Breach Notification:** We will notify you any time your PHI may have been compromised through unauthorized acquisition, access, use or disclosure.

PATIENT RIGHTS

Access: You have the right to look at or get copies of your health information, with limited exceptions. You may request that we provide copies in a format other than photocopies. We will use the format you request unless we cannot practicably do so. You must make a request in writing to obtain access to your health information. You may obtain a form to request access by using the contact information listed at the end of this Notice. We will charge you a reasonable cost-based fee for expenses such as copies and staff time. You may also request access by sending us a letter to the address at the end of this Notice. If you request copies, we may charge you \$0.83 for each page up to thirty (30) and \$0.63 for each page after thirty, a \$19 administrative fee to locate and copy your health information, and postage if you want the copies mailed to you. Radiographs (x-rays) will be duplicated at a reasonable fee. If you request an alternative format, we will charge a cost-based fee for providing your health information in that format. If you prefer, we will prepare a summary or an explanation of your health information for a fee. Contact us using the information listed at the end of this Notice for a full explanation of our fee structure.

Disclosure Accounting: You have the right to receive a list of instances in which we or our business associates disclosed your health information for purposes, other than treatment, payment, healthcare operations, and certain other activities, for the last 6 years. If you request this accounting more than once in a 12-month period, we may charge you a reasonable cost-based fee for responding to these additional requests.

Restriction: You have the right to request that we place additional restrictions on our use or disclosure of your health information. We are not required to agree to these additional restrictions, but if we do, we will abide by our agreement (except in an emergency).

Alternative Communication: You have the right to request that we communicate with you about your health information by alternative means or to alternative locations. You must make your request in writing. Your request must specify the alternative means or location, and provide satisfactory explanation how payments will be handled under the alternative means or location you request.

Amendment: You have the right to request that we amend your health information. Your request must be in writing, and it must explain why the information should be amended. We may deny your request under certain circumstances.

Electronic Notice: If you receive this Notice on a Web site or by electronic mail (e-mail), you are entitled to receive this Notice in written form.

QUESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

If you want more information about our privacy practices or have questions or concerns, please contact us. If you are concerned that we may have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we made about access to your health information or in response to a request you made to amend or restrict the use or disclosure of your health information or to have us communicate with you by alternative means or at alternative locations, you may complain to us using the contact information listed at the end of this Notice. You also may submit a written complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. We will provide you with the address to file your complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services upon request.

We support your right to the privacy of your health information. We 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.

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