



Notice of Privacy Practice

NorthCare

Effective Date: May 16, 2011

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. **PLEASE REVIEW THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY.**

Our Pledge Regarding Information About Our Services to You

NorthCare creates a record of the services we provide you. We are committed to protecting information we create or receive about you. We want you to be fully informed about this information, how we protect it and how we use it. Stated in this Notice are some ways that NorthCare may use or disclose your health information. This Notice covers records from NorthCare and North Rock Medication Clinic.

Treatment Purposes

NorthCare uses and discloses your health information to provide your behavioral health care. We may disclose health information with staff or other healthcare professionals in order to gain additional information and/or input that would help us in planning and/or providing services to you. Some examples include: (1) information shared between your psychiatrist and case manager; (2) information shared with a pharmacist in order to fill a prescription ordered by one of our psychiatrist; (3) information shared in an emergency to help you receive emergency care.

Financial/Payment Purposes

NorthCare uses and discloses your health information to obtain payment for services we provide to you. Example for this purpose: a bill for services may be sent to you, or to your health insurance company or a state program. We may need to send information, such as your name, address, service dates, diagnosis codes and treatment so your services may be authorized and approved.

Organization Operation Purposes

NorthCare may use and disclose information about you to assure that you receive quality care. Operation purposes include, but are not limited to, quality assessment and improvement activities, and licensing or accrediting activities. For example, we may use your information to review and improve the quality of care we provide. We may also share your information with our business associates who perform administrative and other services with NorthCare. We have an agreement with state agencies and companies we do business with to protect the confidentiality and privacy of your health information.

Appointment Reminders

NorthCare may use and disclose your health information to contact and remind you of an appointment. We might telephone you at your home. If you are not at home when we

telephone, we might leave a message about the appointment date and time on your answering machine or with a person answering the telephone.

Sign-in Sheet/Waiting Room

NorthCare may use and disclose your health information by having you sign in when you arrive at a program or office. We may also call out your name in a waiting area when a staff member is ready to see you for an appointment. Precautions will be taken to ensure your confidentiality, including not calling your first and last name out in the waiting area.

Notification and Communication with Family

NorthCare may use and disclose your health information in an emergency or disaster circumstance to notify a family member, your guardian or personal representative about your location or general condition. If you are able and available to make decisions about this use and disclosure of your health information, every effort will be extended to you to agree or object. In disaster and emergency circumstances, we may disclose health information over your objections if we believe it necessary to respond to the emergency. If you are unable or unavailable to agree or object to disclosure of your health information, our behavioral health staff will use their best judgment in communication with your family or others.

Required by Law

NorthCare will use and disclose your health information as required by federal, state or local law. For example, in certain circumstances, we may be required to disclose information for the following purposes:

- Reporting information related to victims of abuse, neglect or domestic violence;
- Responding to judicial and administrative proceedings or, in the course of judicial proceedings, if you have waived your rights to confidentiality under Oklahoma law;
- Complying with a court order or court-ordered warrant, a subpoena or summons issued by a judicial officer, or a grand jury subpoena;
- Helping health oversight agencies during the course of audits, investigations, inspections, licensure, and other proceedings, subject to the limitations imposed by federal and Oklahoma law.

Lawsuits and Disputes

NorthCare may use and disclose your health information if you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute. If the lawsuit is a health negligence action, your health information may be disclosed without a court order. We may also disclose your health information in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawsuit process by someone else involved in a dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.

Public Health and Safety

NorthCare may use and disclose your health information for public health activities such as assisting public health authorities or other legal authorities to prevent or control disease, injury or disability or for other health oversight activities. Your health information may be disclosed to appropriate persons in order to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health and safety of a particular person or the general public.

Specialized Government Functions

NorthCare may use and disclose your health information for national security purposes or to law enforcement officers under special circumstances. Your information may also be used or disclosed to respond to law enforcement or correctional institution official having you in lawful custody.

Medical Examiners, Coroners, Funeral Directors

NorthCare may use and disclose your health information to the state medical examiners office, coroners or funeral directors for the purpose of identifying a deceased person, determining a cause of death, or other duties as authorized by law and as necessary to carry out their duties.

Workers' Compensation

NorthCare may use and disclose your health information as necessary to comply with laws and regulations related to workers' compensation.

Research

NorthCare may use and disclose your health information for research purposes when an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Privacy Board has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your health information and has approved the research.

Your Written Authorization

Except as described in this Notice of Privacy Practice, NorthCare will not use or disclose health information, which identifies you without your written authorization. If you do authorize NorthCare to use or disclose your health information for another purpose, you may revoke your authorization in writing at any time. We are unable to take back any disclosure we have already made with your authorization and we are required to retain our records of the care we provide to you.

Oklahoma law requires that we inform you that your health information used or disclosed as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices may include records which may indicate the presence of a communicable or venereal disease which may include, but are not limited to, diseases such as hepatitis, syphilis, gonorrhea and the human immunodeficiency virus, also known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Your Health Information Rights

You have the right:

- To receive a paper copy of this *Notice of Privacy Practices*. This Notice is posted and available at each location where NorthCare provides services.
- To obtain access to or a copy of your health information, with exceptions as outlined by Oklahoma law. We will respond to your request within thirty (30) days. A reasonable fee may be charged for making copies of your records. Under current Oklahoma law, advance fees of 25¢ per page are allowed. We may also charge for postage if you request the information to be mailed. NorthCare may deny your request

in certain circumstances. If we deny your request for access or copies, you will be informed of your rights to appeal our decision.

- To request that we amend your health information you believe is incorrect or incomplete. Your request to amend must be in writing and include the reasons you believe the information is inaccurate or incomplete. We cannot delete or destroy any information already included in your health record. We are not required to change your health information and if we do not, we will provide you with information about our denial of your request and how you can disagree with the denial. You also have the right to request that we add to your record a statement of up to two hundred and fifty (250) words concerning any statement or item you believe to be incomplete or incorrect.
- To request restrictions or limitations on uses and disclosures of your health information, unless use or disclosure is required by law. To request restriction, you must submit a written request specifying what information you want to restrict or limit and what limitations on our use or disclosure of that information you wish to have imposed. We reserve the right to accept or reject your request and will notify you of our decision.
- To request that you receive health information in a specific way or at a specific location. You may request that NorthCare contact you about our services in a certain way or place, such as by mail. You must specify how or where you wish to be contacted. We will try to accommodate all reasonable requests.
- To receive an accounting of disclosures made of your health information by this agency **unless** the disclosures were for purposes of treatment, payment, health care operations, certain government functions, or pursuant to your written authorization. You have the right to revoke your authorization to use or disclose health information except to the extent that this use or disclosure has already occurred.

Change of Ownership

In the event that NorthCare is sold or merged with another organization, your health information will become the property of the new owner-organization. You will maintain the right to request that copies of your health information be transferred to another agency or provider.

If you would like a more detailed explanation of these rights, or if you would like to exercise one or more of these rights, contact our Privacy Officer at the number listed at the end of this document.

Obligations of NorthCare

We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your confidential health information, provide you with this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your protected health information, abide by the terms of this notice currently in effect, notify you if we are unable to agree with a requested restriction on how your information is used or disclosed, accommodate reasonable requests you make to communicate health information by alternative means or alternative locations and obtain your written authorization to use or disclose your health information for reasons other than those listed above and permitted under law. We reserve the right to change or amend this *Notice of Privacy Practices* at any

time in the future. After an amendment is made, the revised *Notice of Privacy Practices* will apply to all health information that we maintain. A copy of any Revised *Notice of Privacy Practices* will be made available to you at each appointment.

Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Records

The confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse client records maintained by NorthCare is protected by Federal law and regulations. Generally, NorthCare may not say to a person outside NorthCare that a client attends an alcohol or drug abuse program, or disclose any information identifying a consumer as an alcohol or drug abuser.

Exceptions to disclosures related to alcohol and drug abuse records may be made when: (1) The consumer consents in writing; (2) The disclosure is allowed or required by a court order; or (3) The disclosure is made to healthcare personnel in a healthcare emergency or to qualified personnel for research, audit, or program evaluation.

Violation of the Federal law and regulations by NorthCare is a crime. Suspected violations may be reported to appropriate authorities in accordance with Federal regulations. Federal law and regulations do not protect any information about a crime committed by a consumer either at NorthCare or against any person who works for NorthCare or about any threat to commit such a crime. Federal laws and regulations do not protect any information about suspected child abuse or neglect from being reported under State law to appropriate State or local authorities.

Complaint Process for the Notice of Privacy

You will not be penalized for filing a complaint. Complaints about this *Notice of Privacy Practice* or how this agency handles your health information should be directed to:

NorthCare
Attn: Privacy Officer
4436 N. W. 50th
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
(405) 858-2700

You may also submit a formal complaint to:

Regional Manager
Office for Civil Rights – DHHS
1301 Young Street, Suite 1169
Dallas, Texas 75202
(214) 767-4056; (214) 767-8940 TDD