



HIPAA 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.

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact our Privacy Officer at (813) 653-6290.

OUR PLEDGE REGARDING HEALTH INFORMATION

We understand that medical information about you and your health is personal. We are committed to protecting health information about you. We create a record of the care and services you receive at Suncoast Community Health Centers. We need this record to provide you with quality care and to comply with certain legal requirements. This notice applies to all of the records of your care generated by our organization.

This notice will tell you about the ways in which we may use and disclose health information about you. We also describe your rights and certain obligations we have regarding the use and disclosure of health information. We are required by law to:

- Make sure that health information that identifies you is kept private;
- give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices concerning health information about you; and
- follow the terms of the notice that is currently in effect.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

We use and disclose health information in many ways. For each category of uses or disclosures we will explain what we mean and try to give some examples. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed. However, all the ways we are permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of the categories.

- **For treatment.** We may use health information about you to provide you with medical treatment or services. We may disclose health information about you to doctors, nurses, technicians, health students or other personnel who are involved in taking care of you. For example, a doctor treating you for a broken leg may need to know if you have diabetes because diabetes may slow the healing process. In addition, the doctor may need to tell the dietician if you have diabetes so that we can arrange for nutritional counseling. We may also share health information about you in order to coordinate the different things you need, such as prescriptions, lab work and diagnostic testing. We may also disclose health information about you to people who may be involved in your health care such as family members, clergy, rehabilitation centers, etc.
- **For Payment.** We may use and disclose health information about you so that the treatment and services you receive at Suncoast may be billed for and payment collected from you or on your behalf from an insurance company or third party. For example, we may need to give your health/dental plan information about services that you received at our facility so your insurance plan will pay us or reimburse you for those services. We may also tell your health/dental plan about a treatment you are going to receive to obtain prior approval or to determine whether your plan will cover the treatment.
- **For Health Care Operations.** We may use and disclose health information about you for (SCHC) Suncoast Community Health Centers, Inc. operations. These uses and disclosures are necessary to run our organization and make sure that all of our patients receive quality care. For example, we may use health information to review our treatment and services and to evaluate the performance of our staff in caring for you. We may also combine information about many SCHC patients to decide what additional services our organization should offer, what services are not needed, and whether certain new treatments are effective. We may also disclose information to doctors, nurses, technicians, nursing and medical students, and other personnel for review and learning purposes. We may also combine the health information from other similar organizations to compare how we are doing and see where we can make improvements in the care and services we offer. We may remove information that identifies you from this set of health information so others may use it to study health care delivery without learning who the specific patients are.
- **Appointment Reminders.** We may use and disclose health information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment for treatment or health care at SCHC.
- **Treatment Alternatives.** We may use and disclose health information to tell you about or recommend possible treatment options or alternatives that may be of interest to you.

- **Health Related Benefits and Services.** We may use and disclose health information to tell you about health related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.
- **Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care.** We may release health information about you to a friend or family member who is involved in your health care. We may also give information to someone who helps pay for your care. We may also tell your family or friends your condition and that you have been seen in our facilities. In addition, we may disclose health information about you to a friend or family member should an emergent situation arise while you are at one of our facilities.
- **As Required By Law.** We will disclose health information about you when required to do so by federal, state or local law.
- **To Avert Serious Threat to Health or Safety.** We may use and disclose health information about you when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of the public or another person. Any disclosure, however, would only be to someone able to help prevent the threat.
- **For All Other Uses and Disclosures.** All other uses and disclosures of information not contained in this Notice of Privacy Practices will not be disclosed without your authorization.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

- **Organ and Tissue Donation.** If you are an organ donor, we may release health information to organizations that handle organ procurement or organ, eye or tissue transplantation or to an organ donation bank, as necessary to facilitate organ or tissue donation or transplantation.
- **Military and Veterans.** If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release health information about you as required by military command authorities. We may also release health information about foreign military personnel to the appropriate foreign military authority.
- **Workers' Compensation.** We may release health information about you for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.
- **Public Health Risks.** We may disclose health information about you for public health activities. These activities generally include the following:
 - to prevent or control disease, injury or disability;
 - to report births and deaths;
 - to report child abuse or neglect
 - to report elder abuse or neglect;
 - to report reactions to 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 may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition;
 - to notify 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.
- **Lawsuits and Disputes.** If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may disclose health information about you in response to a court or administrative order. We may also disclose health information about you 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 to do so by a law enforcement official;
 - in response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons or similar process;
 - to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person;
 - about the victim of a crime if, under certain limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement;
 - about a death we believe may be the result of criminal conduct;
 - in emergency circumstances 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 may also release health information to funeral directors as necessary to carry out their duties.
- **National Security and Intelligence Activities.** We may release health information about you 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 about you to authorized federal officials so they may provide protection to the President, other authorized persons or foreign heads of state or conduct special investigations.
- **Inmates.** If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under custody of a law enforcement official we may release health information about you to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be necessary: (1) for the institution to provide you with health/dental care; (2) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of others; or (3) for the safety and security of the correctional institution.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

You have the following rights regarding health information we maintain about you:

- **Right to Inspect and Copy.** You have the right to inspect and copy health information that may be used to make decisions about your care. Usually, this includes medical, dental and billing records, but does not include psychotherapy notes. To inspect and copy health information that may be used to make decisions about you, you must submit your request in writing to the Privacy Officer. If you request a copy of the information, we may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing or other supplies associated with your request. We may deny your request to inspect and copy in very limited circumstances. If you are denied access to health information, you may request, in writing, that the denial be reviewed. Another licensed health care professional chosen by SCHC will review your request and the denial. The person conducting the review will not be the person who previously denied your request. We will comply with the outcome of the review.
- **Right to Amend.** If you feel that health information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to include additional information in your health record. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as all of the information, both old and new, is kept by SCHC. To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to our Privacy Officer. In addition, you must provide a reason that supports your request. We may deny your request for an amendment if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support the request. In addition, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that:
 - was not created by us; unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment;
 - is not part of the health record kept by or for our organization;
 - is not part of the information which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or
 - is accurate and complete.
- **Right to an Accounting of Disclosures.** You have the right to request “an accounting of disclosures.” This is a list of the disclosures we made of health information about you, excluding disclosures for the purpose of treatment, payment and healthcare operations. To request this list or accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to the Clinic Administrator. Your request must state a time period, which may not be longer than six years and may not include dates before April 3, 2003. Your request should indicate in what form you want the list (for example, on paper, electronically). The first list you request within a 12-month period will be free. For additional list, we may charge you for the costs of providing the list. We will notify you of the cost involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at that time before any costs are incurred.
- **Right to Request Restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the medical information we use or disclose about you for treatment, payment or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the health information we disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family or friend.

We are not required to agree to your request. If we do agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you emergency treatment. To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to our Privacy Officer. In your request, you must tell us (1) what information you want to limit; (2) whether you want to limit our use, disclose or both; and (3) to whom you want the limits to apply, for example, disclosures to your spouse.
- **Right to Request Confidential Communication.** You have the right to request we communicate with you about health matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you at work or by mail.

To request confidential communications, you must make your request in writing to our Privacy Officer. We will not ask you the reason for your request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must tell us how or where you wish to be contacted. If you do not tell us how or where you wish to be contacted, we do not have to follow your request.
- **Right to Restrict Release of Information for Certain Services.** You have the right to restrict disclosure of information regarding services for which you have paid in full or on an out of pocket basis. This information can be released only upon your written authorization.
- **Right to 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.

To obtain a paper copy of this notice, please ask any of our front office staff or our Privacy Officer or you may write to us at SCHC, Inc., 313 S. Lakewood Drive, Brandon, FL 33511.

- **Right to a Breach Notification.** You have the right to be notified of any breach of your unsecured healthcare information.

HIPAA PRIVACY RULE TO SUPPORT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE PRIVACY. Prohibits the use or disclosure of PHI for any of the following activities:

- To conduct a criminal, civil, or administrative investigation into or impose criminal, civil, or administrative liability on any person for the mere act of seeking, obtaining, providing, or facilitating reproductive health care, where such health care is lawful under the circumstances in which it is provided.
- The identification of any person for the purpose of conducting such investigation or imposing such liability.

CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE

- We reserve the right to change this notice. We reserve the right to make the revised or changed notice effective for health information we already have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. We will post a copy of the current notice in our facilities. The notice will contain on the first page the effective date. In addition, each time you are seen for treatment or healthcare services at our facilities, we will offer you a copy of the current notice in effect.

COMPLAINTS

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our organization or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. **To file a complaint with SCHC, please write to:**

Suncoast Community Health Centers, Inc.
HIPAA Privacy Officer
313 South Lakewood Drive
Brandon, FL 33511

You may also file a written complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201, Toll Free Call Center: 1-877-696-6775.

All complaints must be submitted in writing and within 180 days of the violation being discovered/suspected. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.

OTHER USES OF HEALTH INFORMATION

Other uses and disclosures of health information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written permission. If you provide us permission to use or disclose health information about you, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, we will no longer use or disclose health information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain our records of the care we provided to you.