

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act - Administrative Simplification (HIPAA-AS) Notice of Privacy Practices

Our Legal Duty

As your health plan, we are required by applicable federal and state laws to maintain the privacy of your protected health information (PHI). This notice describes our privacy practices, our legal duties, and your rights concerning your PHI. We will follow the privacy practices that are described in this notice while it is in effect. This notice took effect **April 14, 2003**, and will remain in effect until a revised notice is issued.

We reserve the right to change our privacy practices and the terms of this notice at any time and to make the terms of our notice effective for all PHI that we maintain.

Before we make a significant change in our privacy practices, we will change this notice and send the new notice to you.

How we can use or disclose PHI without a specific authorization

To You: We must disclose your PHI to you, as described in the Individual Rights section of this notice.

For Treatment: For example, we may disclose PHI in an electronic health record we create from claims information, to a doctor or hospital at their request, in order for them to provide treatment to you. Additionally we may disclose PHI to a doctor, dentist or a hospital at their request for their treatment purposes.

For Payment: For example, we may use and disclose PHI to pay claims for services provided to you by doctors, dentists or hospitals. We may also disclose your PHI to a health care provider or another health plan so that the provider or plan may obtain payment of a claim or engage in other payment activities.

For Health Care Operations: For example, we may use or disclose PHI to conduct quality assessment and improvement activities, to conduct fraud and abuse investigations, to engage in care coordination or case management, or to communicate with you about health related benefits and services or treatment alternatives that may be of interest to you. We may also disclose PHI to a health care provider or another health plan subject to federal privacy laws, as long as the provider or plan has or had a relationship with you and the PHI is disclosed only for certain health care operations of that provider or plan. We may also disclose PHI to other entities with which we have contracted to perform or provide certain services on our behalf (i.e. business associates).

For Public Health and Safety: We may use or disclose PHI to the extent necessary to avert a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of you or others. We may also disclose PHI for public health and government health care oversight activities and to report suspected abuse, neglect or domestic violence to government authorities.

As Required by Law: We may use or disclose PHI when we are required to do so by law.

For Process and Proceedings: We may disclose PHI in response to a court or administrative order, subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process.

For Law Enforcement: We may disclose PHI to a law enforcement official with regard to crime victims and criminal activities.

Special Government Functions: We may disclose the PHI of military personnel or inmates or other persons in lawful custody under certain circumstances. We may disclose PHI to authorized federal officials for lawful national security activities.

To Plan Sponsors, if applicable (including employers who act as Plan Sponsors): We may disclose enrollment and disenrollment information to the plan sponsor of your group health plan. We may also disclose certain PHI to the plan sponsor to perform plan administration functions. We may disclose summary health information to the plan sponsor so that the plan sponsor may either:

- Obtain premium bids; or

- Decide whether to amend, modify or terminate your group health plan

For Research, Death, and Organ Donation: We may use or disclose PHI in certain circumstances related to research, death or organ donation.

For Workers' Compensation: We may disclose PHI as permitted by workers' compensation and similar laws.

Uses and disclosures of PHI permitted only after authorization is received

Authorization: You may give us written authorization to use your PHI or disclose it to anyone for any purpose not otherwise permitted or required by law. If you give us an authorization, you may revoke it in writing at any time. Your revocation will not affect any use or disclosure permitted by your authorization while it was in effect.

To Family and Friends: While the law permits us in certain circumstances to disclose your PHI to family, friends and others, we will do so only with your authorization. In the event you are unable to authorize such disclosure, but emergency or similar circumstances indicate that disclosure would be in your best interest, we may disclose your PHI to family, friends or others to the extent necessary to help with your health care coverage arrangements.

Individual Rights

To exercise any of these rights, please call the customer service number on your ID card.

Access: With limited exceptions, you have the right to review in person, or obtain copies of, your PHI. We may charge you a reasonable fee as allowed by law.

Amendment: With limited exceptions, you have the right to request that we amend your PHI.

Disclosure Accounting: You have the right to request and receive a list of certain disclosures made of your PHI. If you request this list more than once in a 12-month period, we may charge you a reasonable fee as allowed by law to respond to any additional request.

Use/Disclosure Restriction: You have the right to request that we restrict our use or disclosure of your PHI for certain purposes. We are not required to agree to a requested restriction. We will agree to restrict use or disclosure of your PHI provided the law allows and we determine the restriction does not impact our ability to administer your benefits. Even when we agree to a restriction request, we may still disclose your PHI in a medical emergency and use or disclose your PHI for public health and safety and other similar public benefit purposes permitted or required by law.

Confidential Communication: You have the right to request that we communicate with you in confidence about your PHI at an alternative address. When you call the customer service number on your ID card to request confidential communications at an alternative address, please ask for a PHI address.

Note: If you choose to have confidential communications sent to you at a PHI address, we will only respond to inquiries from you. If you receive services from any health care providers, you are responsible for notifying those providers directly if you would like a PHI address from them.

Privacy Notice: You have the right to request and receive a copy of this notice at any time. For more information or if you have questions about this notice, please contact us using the information listed at the end of this notice.

Organizations Covered by this Notice

This Notice applies to the privacy practices of the organizations listed below:

NORTH TEXAS GASTROINTESTINAL ASSOCIATES

SHAWN W. PANZER, M.D.

Complaints

If you are concerned that we may have violated your privacy rights, you may complain to us using the contact information listed at the end of this notice. You may also submit a written complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. We will provide you with the address for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services upon request.

We support your right to protect the privacy of your PHI. 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.

Contact Office:

Region VI, Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
1301 Young Street, Suite 1169
Dallas, TX 75202

Practice Contact Information:

North Texas Gastrointestinal Associates
HIPAA Compliance Officer: Kris Davis
2501 Scripture, Ste 201
Denton, TX 76201
940-566-4720