

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

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

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) requires health plans to notify plan participants and beneficiaries about its policies and practices to protect the confidentiality of their health information (45 *Code of Federal Regulations* parts 160 and 164). This document is intended to satisfy HIPAA's notice requirement with respect to all health information created, received, or maintained by the Vanderbilt University-sponsored health plans (the plans). The regulations will supersede any discrepancy between the information in this notice and the regulations.

The plans need to create, receive, and maintain records that contain health information about you to administer the plans and provide you with health care benefits. This notice describes the plans' health information privacy policy with respect to your health care, dental, personal spending account and flexible reimbursement account benefits. The notice tells you the ways the plans may use and disclose health information about you, describes your rights, and the obligations the plans have regarding the use and disclosure of your health information. It does not address the health information policies or practices of your health care providers.

Vanderbilt's Commitment Regarding Health Information Privacy

The privacy policy and practices of the plans protect confidential health information that identifies you or could be used to identify you and relates to a physical or mental health condition or the payment of your health care expenses. This individually identifiable health information is known as "protected health information" (PHI). Your PHI will not be used or disclosed without a written authorization from you, except as described in this notice or as otherwise permitted by federal and state health information privacy laws.

Privacy Obligations of the Plans

The plans are required by law to:

- Make sure that health information that identifies you is kept private;
- Give you this notice of the plans' legal duties and privacy practices with respect to health information about you; and
- Follow the terms of the notice that is currently in effect.

How the Plans May Use and Disclose Health Information About You

The following are the different ways the plans may use and disclose your PHI without your written authorization:

- *For Treatment.* The plans may disclose your PHI to a health care provider who renders treatment on your behalf. For example, if you are unable to provide your medical history as the result of an accident, the plans may advise an emergency room physician about the types of prescription drugs you currently take.
- *For Payment.* The plans may use and disclose your PHI so claims for health care treatment, services, and supplies you receive from health care providers may be paid according to the terms of the plans. For example, the plans may receive and maintain information about surgery you received to enable the plans to process a hospital's claim for reimbursement of surgical expenses incurred on your behalf.
- *For Health Care Operations.* The plans may use and disclose your PHI to enable it to operate or operate more efficiently or make certain all of the plans' participants receive their health benefits. For example, the plans may use your PHI for case management or to perform population-based studies designed to reduce health care costs. In addition, the plans may use or disclose your PHI to conduct compliance reviews, audits, actuarial studies, and/or for fraud and abuse detection. The plans may also combine health information about many plan participants and disclose it to Vanderbilt in summary fashion so it can decide what coverages the plans should provide. The plans may remove information that identifies you from health information disclosed to Vanderbilt so it may be used without Vanderbilt's learning who the specific participants are.
- *To Vanderbilt.* The plans may disclose your PHI to designated Vanderbilt personnel so they can carry out their plan-related administrative functions, including the uses and disclosures described in this notice. Such disclosures will be made only to Vanderbilt's Associate Vice Chancellor/Chief Human Resources Officer ("the plan administrator") and/or the members of Vanderbilt's Office of Benefits Administration and/or the direct billing/COBRA department. These individuals will protect the privacy of your health information and ensure it is used only as described in this notice or as permitted by law. Unless authorized by you in writing, your health information: 1) may not be disclosed by the plans to any other Vanderbilt employee or department and 2) will not be used by Vanderbilt for any employment-related actions and decisions or in connection with any other employee benefit plan sponsored by Vanderbilt.
- *To a Business Associate.* Certain services are provided to the plans by third party administrators known as "business associates." For example, the plans may input information about your health care treatment into an electronic claims processing system maintained by the business associate so your claim may be paid. In so doing, the plans will disclose your PHI to its business associate so it can perform its claims payment function. However, the plans will require its business associates, through contract, to appropriately safeguard your health information.
- *Treatment Alternatives.* The plans may use and disclose your PHI to tell you about possible treatment options or alternatives that may be of interest to you.
- *Health-Related Benefits and Services.* The plans may use and disclose your PHI to tell you about health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.
- *Individual Involved in Your Care or Payment of Your Care.* The plans may disclose PHI to a close friend or family member involved in or who helps pay for your health care. The plans may also advise a family member or close friend about your condition, your location (for example, that you are in the hospital), or death.
- *As Required by Law.* The plans will disclose your PHI when required to do so by federal, state or local law, including those that require the reporting of certain types of wounds or physical injuries.
- *To the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).* The plans may disclose your PHI to HHS for the investigation or determination of compliance with privacy regulations.

Special Use and Disclosure Situations

The plans may also use or disclose your PHI under the following circumstances:

- *Lawsuits and Disputes.* If you become involved in a lawsuit or other legal action, the plans may disclose your PHI in response to a court or administrative order, a subpoena, warrant, discovery request, or other lawful due process.
- *Law Enforcement.* The plans may release your PHI if asked to do so by a law enforcement official, for example, to identify or locate a suspect, material witness, or missing person or to report a crime, the crime's location or victims, or the identity, description, or location of the person who committed the crime.
- *Worker's Compensation.* The plans may disclose your PHI to the extent authorized by and to the extent necessary to comply with worker's compensation laws and other similar programs.
- *Military and Veterans.* If you are or become a member of the U.S. armed forces, the plans may release medical information about you as deemed necessary by military command authorities.
- *To Avert Serious Threat to Health or Safety.* The plans may use and disclose your PHI when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety, or the health and safety of the public or another person.
- *Public Health Risks.* The plans may disclose health information about you for public health activities. These activities include preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability; reporting births and deaths; reporting child abuse or neglect; or reporting reactions to medication or problems with medical products or to notify people of recalls of products they have been using.

- **Health Oversight Activities.** The plans may disclose your PHI to a health oversight agency for audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure necessary for the government to monitor the health care system and government programs.
- **Research.** Under certain circumstances, the plans may use and disclose your PHI for medical research purposes.
- **National Security, Intelligence Activities, and Protective Services.** The plans may release your PHI to authorized federal officials: 1) for intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law and 2) to enable them to provide protection to the members of the U. S. government or foreign heads of state, or to conduct special investigations.
- **Organ and Tissue Donation.** If you are an organ donor, the plans may release medical information to organizations that handle organ procurement or organ, eye, or tissue transplantation or to an organ donation bank to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation.
- **Coroners, Medical Examiners, and Funeral Directors.** The plans may release your PHI to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or to determine the cause of death. The plans may also release your PHI to a funeral director, as necessary, to carry out his/her duty.

Your Rights Regarding Health Information About You

Your rights regarding the health information the plans maintain about you are as follows:

- **Right to Inspect and Copy.** You have the right to inspect and copy your PHI. This includes information about your plan eligibility, claim and appeal records, and billing records, but does not include psychotherapy notes. To inspect and copy health information maintained by the plans, submit your request in writing to the plan administrator. The plans may charge a fee for the cost of copying and/or mailing your request. In limited circumstances, the plans may deny your request to inspect and copy your PHI. Generally, if you are denied access to health information, you may request a review of the denial.
- **Right to Amend.** If you feel that health information the plans have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask to amend it. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for the plans. To request an amendment, send a detailed request in writing to the plan administrator. You must provide the reason(s) to support your request. The plans may deny your request if you ask to amend health information that was: accurate and complete, not created by the plans; not part of the health information kept by or for the plans; or not information that you would be permitted to inspect and copy.
- **Right to an Accounting of Disclosures.** You have the right to request an "accounting of disclosures." This is a list of disclosures of your PHI that the plans have made to others, except for those necessary to carry out health care treatment, payment, or operations; disclosures made to you; disclosures made prior to this effective date; or in certain other situations. To request an accounting of disclosures, submit your request in writing to the plan administrator. Your request must state a time period, which may not be longer than six years prior to the date the accounting was requested.
- **Right to Request Restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction on the health information the plans 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 the plans disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member or friend. For example, you could ask that the plans not use or disclose information about a surgery you had. To request restrictions, make your request in writing to the plan administrator. You must advise us: 1) what information you want to limit; 2) whether you want to limit the plans' use, disclosure, or both; and 3) to whom you want the limit(s) to apply.

Note: The plans are not required to agree to your request.

- **Right to Request Confidential Communications.** You have the right to request that the plans communicate with you about health matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that the plans send you explanation of benefits (EOB) forms about your benefit claims to a specified address. To request confidential communications, make your request in writing to the plan administrator. The plans will make every attempt to accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted.
- **Right to a Paper Copy of this Notice.** You have the right to a paper copy of this notice. You may write to the plan administrator to request a written copy of this notice at any time.

A Note About Personal Representatives

You may exercise your rights through a personal representative. Your personal representative will be required to produce evidences of his/her authority to act on your behalf before that person will be given access to your PHI or allowed to take any action for you. Proof of such authority may take one of the following forms:

- A power of attorney for health care purposes, notarized by a notary public;
- A court order of appointment of the person as the conservator or guardian of the individual; or
- An individual who is the parent of a minor child.

The plans retain discretion to deny access to your PHI to a personal representative to provide protection to those vulnerable people who depend on others to exercise their rights under these rules and who may be subject to abuse or neglect. This also applies to personal representatives of minors.

Changes to this Notice

The plans reserve the right to change this notice at any time and to make the revised or changed notice effective for health information the plans already have about you, as well as any information the plans receive in the future. The plans will post a copy of the current notice in the Vanderbilt benefits office at all times. Any revised version of this notice will be posted on the HR Web site (<http://hr.vanderbilt.edu>) within 60 days of the effective date of any material change to the uses or disclosures, the individual's rights, the duties of the plans or other privacy practices stated in this notice.

Complaints

If you believe your privacy rights under this policy have been violated, you may file a written complaint with the plan administrator at the address listed below. Alternatively, you may file a complaint with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Hubert H. Humphrey Building, 200 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington D.C. 20201), generally, within 180 days of when the act or omission complained of occurred.

Note: You will not be penalized or retaliated against for filing a complaint.

Other Uses and Disclosures of Health Information

Other uses and disclosures of health information not covered by this notice or by the laws that apply to the plans will be made only with your written authorization. If you authorize the plans to use or disclose your PHI, you may revoke the authorization, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your authorization, the plans will no longer use or disclose your PHI for the reasons covered by your written authorization; however, the plans will not reverse any uses or disclosures already made.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about this notice, please contact:

The Vanderbilt University Plan Administrator
c/o Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources
PMB #407700
2301 Vanderbilt Place
Nashville, TN 37235-7700
615.343.7000

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