

**BENTON COUNTY, IOWA
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.***

If you have any questions about this Notice of Privacy Practices contact the County's Privacy Officer:

Carol Zander

Benton County is required by law to maintain the privacy of protected health information, to provide individuals with notice of its legal duties and privacy practices with respect to protected health information, and to notify affected individuals following a breach of unsecured protected health information.

This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how the County may use and disclose your protected health information to carry out treatment, payment or health care operations and for other purposes that are permitted or required by law. It also describes your rights to access and control your protected health information. "Protected health information" is information about you, including demographic information, that may identify you and that relates to your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition and related health care services.

The County is required to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices. The County may change the terms of this notice, at any time. The new notice will be effective for all protected health information that the County maintains at that time. Upon request, the County will provide you with any revised Notice of Privacy Practices.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU.

PERMITTED USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

Your protected health information may be used and disclosed by the County for the purpose of providing or accessing health care services for you. Your protected health information may also be used and disclosed to pay your health care bills and to support the business operation of the County.

The following categories describe ways that the County is permitted to use and disclose health care information. Examples of types of uses and disclosures are listed in each category. Not every use or disclosure for each category is listed; however, all of the ways the County is permitted to use and disclose information falls into one of these categories:

1) **Treatment:**

The County may use and disclose your protected health information to provide, coordinate or manage your health care and any related services. This includes the coordination or management of your health care with a third party that has already obtained your permission to have access to your protected health information. For example, the County would disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to a home health agency that provides care to you. Another example is that protected health information may be provided to a facility to which you have been referred to ensure that the facility has the necessary information to treat you.

2) **Payment**

The County may use and disclose health care information about you so that the treatment and services you receive may be billed to and payment may be collected from you, an insurance company or a third party. The County may also discuss your protected health information about a service you are going to receive to determine whether you are eligible for the service, and for undertaking utilization review activities. For

example, authorizing a service may require that your relevant protected health information be discussed with a provider to determine your need and eligibility for the service.

3) Healthcare Operations

The County may use or disclose, as needed, your protected health information in order to support its business activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, quality assessment activities, employee review activities, licensing and conducting or arranging for other business activities. For example, the County may use or disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to contact you to remind you of your appointment or to provide information about alternate services or other health-related benefits.

OTHER PERMITTED AND REQUIRED USES & DISCLOSURES THAT REQUIRE PROVIDING YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO AGREE OR OBJECT

The County may share your protected health information with third party “business associates” that perform various activities (e.g., billing, transcription services) for the County. Whenever an arrangement between the County and a business associate involves the use or disclosure of your protected health information, the County will have a written contract that contains terms that will protect the privacy of your protected health information.

USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION REQUIRING YOUR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION

Other uses and disclosures of your protected health information will be made only with your written authorization, unless otherwise permitted or required by law as described below. You may revoke this authorization, at any time, in writing, except to the extent that the County has taken an action in reliance on the use or disclosure indicated in the authorization.

The County may use and disclose your protected health information in the following instances. You have the opportunity to agree or object to the use or disclosure of all or part of your protected health information. If you are not present or able to agree or object to the use or disclosure of the protected health information, then the County may, using professional judgment, determine whether the disclosure is in your best interest. In this case, only the protected health information that is relevant to your health care will be disclosed.

1) Others Involved in Your Healthcare

Unless you object, the County may disclose to a member of your family, a relative, a close friend or any other person you identify, your protected health information that directly relates to that person’s involvement in your health care. If you are unable to agree or object to such a disclosure, the County may disclose such information as necessary if the County, based on its professional judgment, determines that it is in your best interest. The County may use or disclose protected health information to notify or assist in notifying a family member, personal representative or any other person that is responsible for your care of your location, general condition or death. Finally, the County may use or disclose your protected health information to an authorized public or private entity to assist in disaster relief efforts and to coordinate uses and disclosures to family or other individuals involved in your health care.

2) Emergencies

The County may use or disclose your protected health information in an emergency treatment situation. If this happens, The County shall try to obtain your acknowledgment of receipt of the Notice of Privacy Practices as soon as reasonably practicable after the delivery of treatment.

OTHER PERMITTED AND REQUIRED USES AND DISCLOSURES THAT MAY BE MADE WITHOUT YOUR AUTHORIZATION OR OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT

The County may use or disclose your protected health information in the following situations without your consent or authorization. These situations include:

1) Required By Law

The County may use or disclose your protected health information to the extent that the use or disclosure is required by law. You will be notified, as required by law, of any such uses or disclosures.

2) Public Health

The County may disclose your protected health information for public health activities and purposes to a public health authority that is permitted by law to collect or receive the information. The disclosure will be made for the purpose of controlling disease, injury or disability. The County may also disclose your protected health information, if directed by the public health authority, to a foreign government agency that is collaborating with the public health authority.

3) Communicable Diseases

The County may disclose your protected health information, if authorized by law, to a person who may have been exposed to a communicable disease or may otherwise be at risk of contracting or spreading the disease.

4) Health Oversight

The County may disclose your protected health information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as audits, investigations and inspections. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies that oversee the health care system, government benefit programs, other government regulatory programs and civil rights laws.

5) Abuse or Neglect

The County may disclose your protected health information to a public health authority that is authorized by law to receive reports of child abuse or neglect. In addition, the County may disclose your protected health information if it believes that you have been a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence to the governmental entity or agency authorized to receive such information. In this case, the disclosure will be made consistent with the requirements of applicable federal and state laws.

6) Food and Drug Administration

The County may disclose your protected health information to a person or company required by the Food and Drug Administration to report adverse events, product defects or problems, biologic product deviations, track products; to enable product recalls; to make repairs or replacements, or to conduct post marketing surveillance, as required.

7) Legal Proceedings

The County may disclose protected health information in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding, in response to an order of a court or administrative tribunal (to the extent such disclosure is expressly authorized), in certain conditions in response to a subpoena, discovery request or other lawful process.

8) Law Enforcement

The County may also disclose protected health information, so long as applicable legal requirements are met, for law enforcement purposes. These law enforcement purposes include (1) legal processes and otherwise required by law, (2) limited information requests for identification and location purposes, (3) pertaining to victims of a crime, (4) suspicion that death has occurred as a result of criminal conduct, (5) in the event that a crime occurs on county premises, and (6) medical emergency (not on the county's premises) and it is likely that a crime has occurred.

9) Coroners, Funeral Directors, and Organ Donation

The County may disclose protected health information to a coroner or medical examiner for identification purposes, determining cause of death or for the coroner or medical examiner to perform other duties authorized by law. We may also disclose protected health information to a funeral director, as authorized by law, in order to permit the funeral director to carry out their duties. We may disclose such information in reasonable anticipation of death. Protected health information may be used and disclosed for cadaveric organ, eye or tissue donation purposes.

10) Research

The County may disclose your protected health information to researchers when their research has been approved by an institutional review board that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your protected health information.

11) Criminal Activity

Consistent with applicable federal and state laws, the County may disclose your protected health information, if it believes that the use or disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public. The County may also disclose protected health information if it is necessary for law enforcement authorities to identify or apprehend an individual.

12) Military Activity and National Security

When the appropriate conditions apply, the County may use or disclose protected health information of individuals who are Armed Forces personnel (1) for activities deemed necessary by appropriate military command authorities; (2) for the purpose of a determination by the Department of Veterans Affairs of your eligibility for benefits, or (3) to foreign military authority if you are a member of that foreign military services. The County may also disclose your protected health information to authorized federal officials for conducting national security and intelligence activities, including for the provision of protective services to the President or others legally authorized.

13) Workers' Compensation

Your protected health information may be disclosed by the County as authorized to comply with workers' compensation laws and other similar legally-established programs.

14) Inmates

The County may use or disclose your protected health information if you are an inmate of a correctional facility and the County created or received your protected health information in the course of providing care to you.

15) Required Uses and Disclosures

Under the law, the County must make disclosures to you and when required by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to investigate or determine County compliance with the requirements of 45 C.F.R. section 164.500 et. seq.

YOUR RIGHTS

The following are a list of your rights with respect to your protected health information and a brief description of how you may exercise these rights:

RIGHT TO INSPECT AND COPY YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

This means you may inspect and obtain a copy of protected health information about you that is contained in a designated record set for as long as the County maintains the protected health information. A "designated record set" contains medical and billing records and any other records that the County uses in making decisions about you. Under federal law, however, you may not inspect or copy the following records; psychotherapy notes; information compiled in reasonable anticipation of, or use in, a civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceeding, and protected health information that is subject to law that prohibits access to protected health information. Depending on the circumstances, a decision to deny access may be reviewable. In some circumstances, you may have a right to have this decision reviewed. Please contact the County Privacy Contact if you have questions about access to your medical record.

RIGHT TO REQUEST A RESTRICTION OF YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

This means you may ask the County not to use or disclose any part of your protected health information for the purposes of treatment, payment or healthcare operations. You may also request that any part of your protected health information not be disclosed to family members or friends who may be involved in your care or for notification purposes as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices. Your request must state the specific restriction requested and to whom you want the restriction to apply.

The County is not required to agree to a restriction that you may request. If the County believes that it is in your best interest to permit use and disclosure of your protected health information, your protected health information will not be restricted. If the County does agree to the requested restriction, it may not use or disclose your protected health information in violation of that restriction unless it is needed to provide emergency treatment. With this in mind, please discuss any restriction you wish to request with the County. You may request a restriction in writing to the County Privacy Officer.

RIGHT TO REQUEST CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COUNTY BY ALTERNATIVE MEANS OR AT AN ALTERNATIVE LOCATION

The County will accommodate reasonable requests. The County may also condition this accommodation by asking you for information as to how payment will be handled or specification of an alternative address or other method of contact. The County will not request an explanation from you as to the basis for the request. Please make this request in writing to the County Privacy Contact.

RIGHT TO REQUEST AN AMENDMENT TO YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

This means you may request an amendment of protected health information about you in a designated record set for as long as the County maintains this information. In certain cases, the County may deny your request for an amendment. If the County denies your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with the County and the County may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and will provide you with a copy of any such rebuttal.

RIGHT TO RECEIVE AN ACCOUNTING OF CERTAIN DISCLOSURES OF YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

This right applies to disclosures for purposes other than treatment, payment or healthcare operations as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices. It excludes disclosures the County may have made to you, to family members or friends involved in your care, or for notification purposes. You have the right to receive specific information regarding these disclosures that occur after April 14, 2003.

RIGHT TO OBTAIN A PAPER COPY OF THIS NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a paper copy of this notice, upon request, even if you have agreed to accept this notice electronically.

RIGHT TO BREACH NOTIFICATION

You have the right to be notified of any breach of your unsecured healthcare information.

CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE

The County reserves the right to amend our privacy practices and the terms of the Notice of Privacy Practices at any time in the future. Until such amendment is made, we are required by law to comply with this Notice. After an amendment is made, the revised Notice of Privacy Protections will apply to all protected health information that we maintain, regardless of when it was created or received.

The County is prohibited from using or disclosing genetic information of an individual for underwriting purposes.

COMPLAINTS

You may file a complaint to the County or to the Secretary of Health and Human Services if you believe your privacy rights have been violated by the County. You may file a complaint against the County by notifying the County Privacy Officer. The County will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

You may contact the County Privacy Officer, Carol Zander at (319) 472-4743 or czander@co.benton.ia.us for further information about the complaint process.

This notice was published and becomes effective on September 23, 2013.

This notice was provided on May 2016. – updated June 2016

This notice was updated December 1, 2016