

**SOMERSET HOSPITAL
HOME HEALTH AND HOSPICE CARE**

HIPAA NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Effective Date: April 1, 2003

**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, please contact
Home Health and Hospice Care at 814-443-4663**

WHO WILL FOLLOW THIS NOTICE:

This notice describes Somerset Hospital and entities practices and that of:

- Any health care professional authorized to enter information into your home care record.
- All departments and units of the hospital.
- Any member of a volunteer group we allow to help you while you are receiving home care services.
- All employees, staff and other hospital personnel.
- Somerset Hospital, Twin Lakes Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center, Somerset Health Services, Somerset Med Services and the offices of our staff physicians. All these entities, sites and locations follow the terms of this notice. In addition, these entities, sites and locations may share medical information with each other for treatment, payment or hospital operations purposes described in this notice.

OUR PLEDGE REGARDING MEDICAL INFORMATION:

We understand that medical information about you and your health is personal. We are committed to protecting medical information about you. We create a record of the care and services you receive in home care. 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 home health and hospice, whether made by home care personnel or your personal doctor.

Your personal doctor may have different policies or notices regarding the doctor's use and disclosure of your medical information created in the doctor's office or clinic.

This notice will tell you about the ways in which we may use and disclose medical information about you. We also describe your rights and certain obligations we have regarding the use and disclosure of medical information.

We are required by law to:

- make sure that medical information that identifies you is kept private;
- give you this notice or our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to medical information about you; and
- follow the terms of the notice that is currently in effect.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

The following categories describe different ways that we use and disclose medical information. 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 of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of the categories.

For Treatment. We may use medical information about you to provide you with medical treatment or services.

For example. Information obtained during a home visit will be recorded in your medical record. Your home care professionals will record the actions they took, the observations they made and what they did to carry out the orders for your care that they received from your physician.

We will also provide your physician and any subsequent health care provider with copies of plans of treatment, discharge and transfer summaries and other reports of visits that should assist in your continued treatment.

We also have Interdisciplinary (Hospice) and Multidisciplinary (Home Health) team conference where various aspects of your care are discussed in an effort to provide the care and services you need.

Different departments of the hospital also may share medical information about you in order to coordinate the different things you need, such as prescriptions, lab work and x-rays. We also may disclose medical information about you to people outside the agency who may be involved in your medical care, such as family members, clergy or others we use to provide services that are part of your care.

For payment. We may use and disclose medical 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.

For example. A bill may be sent to a third-party payer or to you. The information on or accompanying the bill may include information that identifies you, as well as your diagnosis, procedures, and supplies used. In addition, some third-party payers require copies of the Plan of Treatment and visit notes before releasing payment.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requires the transmission of Outcome and Assessment Information (OASIS) that is gathered by your Home Health professionals at various points during the time you are receiving services. This information provides the mechanism for payment for Medicare patients. (See HCFA Outcome Assessment Set Statement of Patient Privacy Rights.)

We may also tell your health plan about home care services you are going to receive to obtain prior approval or to determine whether your plan will cover treatment.

For Health Care Operations. We may use and disclose medical information about you for Home Health and Hospice operations. These uses and disclosures are necessary to run the agency and make sure that all of our patients receive quality care.

For example. We may use medical information to review our treatment and services and to evaluate the performance of our staff in caring for you. We may also combine medical information about many Home Health and Hospice patients to decide what additional services the agency should offer, what services are not needed, and whether certain new treatments are effective. We may also disclose information to doctors, nurses, technicians, medical students, and other hospital personnel for review and learning purposes. We may also combine the medical information we have with medical information from other agencies 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 medical information so others may use it to study health care and health care delivery without learning who the specific patients are.

In addition: there are some services in our agency that are provided through contracts with business associates. Examples include Medical Director, therapy services, pharmacy services, nursing homes and computer services. When these services are contracted, we may disclose your health information to our business associates so that they can perform the job we have asked them to do and also be able to bill a third-part payer or you for services rendered. To protect your health information, we require the business associate to appropriately safeguard your information.

Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care. We may release medical information about you to a friend or family member who is involved in your medical care. We may also give information to someone who helps pay for your care. In addition, we may disclose medical information about you to an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort so that your family can be notified about your condition, status and location.

Treatment Alternatives. We may use and disclose medical 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 medical information to tell you about health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

Community Agencies. We may disclose your health information to community agencies such as the Area Agency on Aging to provide post discharge services for you. These referrals are only done with your consent.

Fundraising Activities. Hospice Care conducts fundraising activities to support those hospice services provided without reimbursement from any other source. During these activities we may disclose some of your medical information to a foundation related to the hospital to enable them to contact you during the fundraising event. The only information disclosed is as follows: your name, address, phone number and dates you received treatment or services from In Touch Hospice. If you do not wish to be contacted for fundraising efforts, please notify Somerset Hospital's Public Relations Department in writing.

As Required By Law. We will disclose medical information about you when required to do so by federal, state or local law.

To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety. We may use and disclose medical 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.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

- Organ and Tissue Donation. -If you are an organ donor, we may release medical 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 and transplantation.

- Military and Veterans. If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release medical information about you as required by military command authorities. We may also release medical information about foreign military personnel to the appropriate foreign military authority.
- Workers' Compensation. We may release medical 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 medical 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 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 medical 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 medical information about you in response to a court or administrative order. We may also disclose medical 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 medical information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official:
 - a. in response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons or similar process;
 - b. to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person;
 - c. about the victim of a crime if, under certain limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement;
 - d. about a death we believe may be the result of criminal conduct;
 - e. about criminal conduct at the hospital; and
 - f. 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 medical 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 medical information about patients of the agency to funeral directors as necessary to carry out their duties.

- National Security and Intelligence Activities. We may release medical information about you to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law.

- Protective Services for the President and Others. We may disclose medical 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.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU.

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

Right to Inspect and Copy. You have the right to inspect and copy medical information that may be used to make decisions about your care. Usually, this includes medical and billing records, but does not include psychotherapy notes.

To inspect and copy medical information that may be used to make decisions about you, you must submit your request in writing to the Home Health and Hospice Care Department. 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 certain very limited circumstances. If you are denied access to medical information, you may request that the denial be reviewed. Another licensed health care professional chosen by the hospital will review your request and the denial.

The person conducting the review will not be the person who denied your request. We will comply with the outcome of the review.

Right to Amend. If you feel that medical information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for the agency.

To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to Home Health and Hospice Care Department. 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 medical information kept by or for the agency;
- 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 disclosure.” This is a list of the disclosures we made of medical information about you.

To request this list or accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to the Home Health and Hospice Care Department. Your request must state a time period which may not be longer than six years and may not include dates before February 26, 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 lists, 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 medical information we 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 we not use or disclose information about intravenous therapy you had.

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 Home Health and Hospice Care Department. In your request, you must tell us (1) what information you want to limit; (2) whether you want to limit our use, disclosure or both; and (3) to whom you want the limits to apply, for example, disclosure to your spouse.

Right to Request Confidential Communications. You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical 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 Home Health and Hospice Care Department. We will not ask you the reason for your request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted.

Right to Paper Copy of This Notice. You have the right to a paper copy of this notice. A paper copy of this notice is part of the packet of information you receive at the time of admission to the agency.

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 medical information we already have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. We will mail you a copy of the revised notice to the address you have supplied us if you are a current patient. The notice will contain on the first page, in the top right-hand corner, the effective date. In addition, each time you are admitted to the agency for home care services, we will provide 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 the agency or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services at the Office of Civil Rights at 1-800-368-1019 or www.ocrmail@hhs.gov. To file a complaint with the agency, contact Home Health and Hospice Care Department, 1590 North Center Avenue, Somerset, Pa. 15501. All complaints must be submitted in writing.

You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.

OTHER USES OF MEDICAL INFORMATION.

Other uses and disclosures of medical 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 medical 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 medical information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you.