



NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Effective Date: August 1, 2006

PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. If you have any questions about this notice, please contact the Health Information Management Department at (334) 732-3078 during regular business hours.

- **Who Will Follow This Notice:**

This notice describes our hospital's practices and that of:

- The physician members of the hospital's medical staff and credentialed, non-physician health care professionals who may provide care in the hospital.
- All departments and units of the hospital.
- Any volunteers who perform volunteer work in the hospital.
- All employees, staff and other hospital personnel.
- All 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.

As used throughout this document, the term "hospital" may be interchanged with "facility" or "agency" if you are receiving care from a non-hospital entity.

- **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 at the hospital 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 the hospital, whether made by hospital 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 own 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:

- Keep private medical information that identifies you;
- Give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to medical information about you; and
- Follow the terms of the Notice of Privacy Rights 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 better understanding, we have provided some examples in each category. 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. We may disclose medical information about you to doctors, nurses, technicians, medical students, students in other health care fields, or other hospital personnel who are involved in taking care of you at the hospital. 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 dietitian if you have diabetes so that we can arrange for appropriate meals. 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 may disclose medical information about you to people outside the hospital who may be involved in your medical care after you leave the hospital, such as family members assisting you or other health care providers, such as nursing homes, home health care agencies, or medical equipment providers. We also may use your medical information to contact you to check that you are progressing in your recovery.
- *For Payment:* We may use and disclose medical information about you so that the treatment and services you receive at the hospital may be billed to and payment may be collected from you, an insurance company or a third party. For example, we may need to give your health plan information about surgery you received at the hospital so your health plan will pay us or reimburse you for the surgery. We may also tell your health plan about a treatment you are going to receive to obtain prior approval or to determine whether your plan will cover the treatment. We may share your information with other health care providers who treat you during your stay in the hospital, such as an ambulance service or a physician who serves as a consultant during your treatment.
- *For Health Care Operations:* We may use and disclose medical information about you for hospital operations. These uses and disclosures are necessary to run the hospital 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 hospital patients to decide what additional services the hospital 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, students in other health care fields, and other hospital personnel for review and learning purposes. We may also combine the medical information we have with medical information from other hospitals 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.
- *Photographs:* We may photograph patients, including newborn babies, for security and identification purposes.
- *Patient Satisfaction Surveys:* We may use a limited amount of information about you to conduct patient satisfaction surveys by telephone and written communications.
- *Health Awareness Materials:* We may use your demographic information to send general health information to you to create awareness in the community of important health topics.
- *Health Fairs/Screenings:* We may use your information to contact you with the results of any screenings that are not available on the day of the health fair/screening. We may keep a copy of your screenings to verify that you received screenings at a health fair.

- *Personal Representatives:* If you or a court has authorized another individual to act on your behalf, we will share information regarding your treatment with your personal representative unless we believe that the sharing of information would jeopardize your health or safety.
- *Appointment Reminders:* We may use and disclose medical information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment for treatment or medical care at the hospital. This practice includes contacting you by telephone.
- *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.
- *Fund Raising Activities:* We may use your demographic information and other limited information to contact you in an effort to raise money for the hospital and its operations. We may disclose information to a foundation related to the hospital so that the foundation may contact you in raising money for the hospital. We only would release contact information, such as your name, address and phone number and the dates you received treatment or services at the hospital. If you do not want the foundation to contact you for fund raising efforts, you must notify the hospital in writing. Correspondence may be sent to 4401 Rive Chase Drive, Phenix City, Alabama 36867.
- *Hospital Directory:* We may include certain limited information about you in the hospital directory while you are a patient at the hospital so your family and friends can visit you in the hospital and generally know how you are doing. This information includes you name, location in the hospital, and your general condition (e.g. good, satisfactory, critical, etc). The directory information may be released to people who ask for you by name; unless you specifically request that we do not include you in the hospital directory. Additionally, your religious affiliation during registration, if you provide it to us at registration, may be given to a minister of your faith even if they do not ask for you by name. This allows you to receive visits from a clergy of your faith. If you do not provide us with your religious affiliation during registration, your name will not be given to any visiting clergy.
- *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 with your medical care or payment for services, unless you inform us that you object to such disclosure. (However, you may not use such an objection to avoid payment for services by a responsible party.) We may use or disclose information about you to locate and notify your family, personal representative or other person responsible for your care that you are in the hospital and your general condition. In the event of a disaster, we may disclose medical information about you to an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort (such as the Red Cross) so that you family can be notified about your condition, status and location.
- *Research:* Under certain circumstances, we may use and disclose medical information about you for records-based research purposes. For example, a research project may involve comparing the health and recovery of all patients who received one medication to those who received another, for the same condition. All research projects, however, are subject to a special approval process, using an Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process evaluates a proposed research project and its use of medical information, trying to balance the research needs with patients' need for privacy of their medical information. Before we disclose medical information contained in medical records to a researcher, the project will have been approved through this research approval process and the researcher will have submitted a plan to protect the confidentiality of patient information.