



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.

This practice uses and discloses health information about you for treatment, to obtain payment for treatment, for administrative purposes, and to evaluate the quality of care that you receive.

This notice describes our privacy practices. You can request a copy of this notice at any time. For more information about this notice or our privacy practices and policies, please contact the Privacy Officer listed at the end of this document.

Treatment, Payment, Health Care Operations

Treatment

We are permitted to use and disclose your medical information to those involved in your treatment. For example, your care may require the involvement of a specialist. When we refer you to a specialist, we will share some or all of your medical information with that physician to facilitate the delivery of care or a specialist in the practice. When we provide treatment, we may request that your primary care physician share your medical information with us. Also, we may provide your primary care physician information about your particular condition so that he or she can appropriately treat you for other medical conditions, if any.

Payment

We are permitted to use and disclose your medical information to bill and collect payment for the services provide to you. For example, we may complete a claim form to obtain payment from your insurer or HMO. The form will contain medical information, such as a description of the medical service provided to you, that your insurer or HMO needs to approve payment to us.

Health Care Operations

We are permitted to use or disclose your medical information for the purposes of health care operations, which are activities that support this practice and ensure that quality care is delivered.

Business Associates

Premier Physicians sometimes contracts with third-party business associates for services. Examples include answering services, transcriptionists, billing services, consultants, and legal counsel. We may disclose your health information to our business associates so that they can perform the job we have asked them to do. To protect your health information, however, our business associates are required by law and by contract to appropriately safeguard your information.

Disclosures That Can Be Made Without Your Authorization

There are situations in which we are permitted by law to disclose or use your medical information without your written authorization or an opportunity to object. In other situations we will ask for your written authorization before using or disclosing any identifiable health information about psychotherapy notes, PHI for marketing purposes, and the sale of PHI. If you choose to sign an authorization to disclose information, you can later revoke that authorization, in writing, to stop future uses and disclosures. However, any revocation will not apply to disclosures or uses already made or taken in reliance on that authorization.

Public Health, Abuse or Neglect, and Health Oversight

We may disclose your medical information for public health activities. Public health activities are mandated by federal, state, or local government for the collection of information about disease, vital statistics (like births and death), or injury by a public health authority. We may disclose medical information, if authorized by law, to a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition. We may disclose your medical information to report reactions to medications, problems with products, or to notify people of recalls of products they may be using.

We may also disclose medical information to a public agency authorized to receive reports of child abuse or neglect. Texas law requires physicians to report child abuse or neglect. Regulations also permit the disclosure of information to report abuse or neglect of elders or the disabled.

We may disclose your medical information to a health oversight agency for those activities authorized by law. Examples of these activities are audits, investigations, licensure applications and inspections which are all government activities undertaken to monitor the health care delivery system and compliance with other laws, such as civil rights laws.

Legal Proceedings and Law Enforcement

We may disclose your medical information in the course of judicial or administrative proceedings in response to an order of the court (or the administrative decision-maker) or other appropriate legal process. Certain requirements must be met before the information is disclosed.

If asked by a law enforcement official, we may disclose your medical information under limited circumstances provided that the information:

- Is released pursuant to legal process, such as a warrant or subpoena;
- Pertains to a victim of crime and are incapacitated;
- Pertains to a person who has died under circumstances that may be related to criminal conduct;
- Is about a victim of crime and we are unable to obtain the person's agreement;
- Is released because of a crime that has occurred on these premises; or
- Is released to locate a fugitive, missing person, or suspect.

To Alert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety.

Your health information may be used and disclosed when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety and that of the public or another person. Any disclosure, however, would only be to someone able to help prevent the threat.

Workers' Compensation

We may disclose your medical information as required by the Texas workers' compensation law.

Inmates

If you are an inmate or under the custody of law enforcement, we may release your medical information to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release is permitted to allow the institution to provide you with medical care, to protect your health or the health and safety of others, or for the safety and security of the institution.

Military, National Security and Intelligence Activities, Protection of the President

We may disclose your medical information for specialized governmental functions such as separation or discharge from military service, requests as necessary by appropriate military command officers (if you are in the military), authorized national security and intelligence activities, as well as authorized activities for the provision of protective services for the President of the United States, other authorized government officials, or foreign heads of state.

Research, Organ Donation, Coroners, Medical Examiners, and Funeral Directors

When a research project and its privacy protections have been approved by an Institutional Review Board or privacy board, we may release medical information to researchers for research purposes. We may release medical information to organ procurement organizations for the purpose of facilitating organ, eye, or tissue donation if you are a donor. Also, we may release your medical information to a coroner or medical examiner to identify a deceased or a cause of death. Further, we may release your medical information to a funeral director where such a disclosure is necessary for the director to carry out his duties.

Required by Law

We may release your medical information where the disclosure is required by law.

Your Rights Under Federal Privacy Regulations

The United States Department of Health and Human Services created regulations intended to protect patient privacy as required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Those regulations create several privileges that patients may exercise. We will not retaliate against a patient that exercises their HIPAA rights.

Requested Restrictions

You may request that we restrict or limit how your protected health information is used or disclosed for treatment, payment, or healthcare operations. Premier Physicians will agree to the request for restriction on the disclosure of PHI to a Health Plan if: (1) The disclosure is for the purpose of carrying out payment or health care operations and is not otherwise required by law; and (2) The PHI pertains solely to a health care item or service for which the individual, or a person other than the health plan acting on behalf of the individual, has paid the covered entity in full.

To request a restriction, submit the following in writing:

- The information to be restricted, what kind of restriction you are requesting (i.e. use of information, disclosure of information or both), and to whom the limits apply. Please send the request to the address and person listed below.

We will comply with your request except under emergency circumstances.

You may also request that we limit disclosure to family members, other relatives, or close personal friends that may or may not be involved in your care.

Premier Physicians may not unilaterally terminate these types of restrictions.

Receiving Confidential Communications by Alternative Means

You may request that we send communications of protected health information by alternative means or to an alternative location. This request must be made in writing to the person listed below. We are required to accommodate only *reasonable* requests. Please specify in your correspondence exactly how you want us to communicate with you and, if you are directing us to send it to a particular place, the contact/address information. You may request alternative means of communications by submitting the appropriate Premier Physicians form.

Inspection and Copies of Protected Health Information

You may inspect and/or copy health information that is within the designated record set, which is information that is used to make decisions about your care. Texas law requires that requests for copies be made in writing and we ask that requests for inspection of your health information also be made in writing. Please send your request to the person listed below.

We may deny your request to inspect and copy in certain limited circumstances. If you are denied access to health information, you may request that the denial be reviewed. A licensed healthcare professional who was not directly involved in the denial of your request will conduct the review. We will comply with the outcome of the review.

Texas law requires that we are ready to provide copies or a narrative within 15 days of your request. We will inform you of when the records are ready or if we believe access should be limited. If we deny access, we will inform you in writing.

HIPAA permits us to charge a reasonable cost based fee. The Texas State Board of Medical Examiners (TSBME) has set limits on fees for copies of medical records that under some circumstances may be lower than the charges permitted by HIPAA. In any event, the *lower* of the fee permitted by HIPAA or the fee permitted by the TSBME will be charged.

HITECH Act Sec.13405 (e)

You may request an electronic copy of your medical records.

- (1) In the electronic form and format requested by you, if it is readily producible in such form and format; or
- (2) If the information is not readily producible in such form and format, Premier Physicians must Provide the information in a readable electronic form and format as agreed between our facility and patient.

Fundraising

We may contact you as part of a fundraising effort relating to the Premier Physicians provided, however, that you are given the opportunity to opt out or elect not to receive any further fundraising communications.

Marketing

In most circumstances, we are required by law to receive your written authorization before we use or disclose your health information for marketing purposes.

Amendment of Medical Information

You may request an amendment of your medical information in the designated record set. Any such request must be made in writing to the person listed below. We will respond within 60 days of your request. We may refuse to allow an amendment if the information:

- Wasn't created by this practice or the physicians here in this practice.
- Is not part of the Designated Record Set?
- Is not available for inspection because of an appropriate denial.
- If the information is accurate and complete.

If Premier Physicians refuse to allow an amendment you are permitted to include a patient statement about the information at issue in your medical record. If we refuse to allow an amendment or approve amendment we will inform you in writing.

Accounting of Certain Disclosures

You have the right to request an "accounting of disclosures." This is a list of the disclosures we made of medical information about you for purposes other than treatment, payment and health care operations. To obtain this list, you must submit your request in writing to Premier Physicians **Compliance/ Privacy/ Security Official**. It must state a time period, which may not be longer than six years and may not include dates before April 14, 2003. Your request should indicate in what form you want the list (for example, on paper, electronically). 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 Receive Notice of a Breach.

We are required to notify you by first class mail or by e-mail (if you have indicated a preference to receive information by e-mail), of any breaches of Unsecured Protected Health Information as soon as possible, but in any event, no later than 60 days following the discovery of the breach. "Unsecured Protected Health Information" is information that is not secured through the use of a technology or methodology identified by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to render the Protected Health Information unusable, unreadable, and undecipherable to unauthorized users. The notice is required to include the following information:

- A brief description of the breach, including the date and it's discovery of the breach , if known;
- A description of the type of Unsecured Protected Health Information involved in the breach;
- Steps you should take to protect yourself from potential harm resulting from the breach;
- A brief description of actions we are taking to investigate the breach, mitigate losses, and protect against further breaches;
- Contact information, including a toll-free telephone number, e-mail address; and
- Web site or postal address to permit you to ask questions or obtain additional information.

In the event the breach involves 10 or more patients whose contact information is out of date we will post a notice of the breach on the home page of our Web site or in a major print or broadcast media. We also are required to submit an annual report to the Secretary of a breach that involved less than 500 patients during the year and will maintain a written log of breaches involving less than 500 patients. If the breach involves more than 500 patients in the state or jurisdiction, we will send notices to prominent media outlets and we are required to immediately notify the Secretary.

IDENTITY THEFT NOTIFICATION LAWS

Pursuant to identity theft rules, promulgated by the Federal Trade Commission Red Flags Rules and the Texas Identity Theft Enforcement and Protection Act, Premier Physicians must immediately notify any individual whose identifying information, which may be included in a patient's health information, has been, or potentially has been, accessed or acquired in an unauthorized manner.

Appointment Reminders, Treatment Alternatives, and Other Health-related Benefits

We may contact you by telephone, mail or both, to provide appointment reminders, information about treatment alternatives, or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

Questions and Contact Person for Requests or Complaints

If you are concerned that your privacy rights have been violated, you may contact the person listed below. You may also send a written complaint to the United States Department of Health and Human Services or Premier Physicians Compliance/Privacy/Security Officer. We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint with the government or us.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
HIPAA Complaint
7500 Security Blvd., C5-24-04,
Baltimore, MD 21244

If you have any questions or want to make a request or complaint pursuant to the rights described above, please contact:

Pamela Porras, CMC, CHCA,
Compliance/Privacy/Security Officer
Premier Physicians,
P.O. Box 5291
Midland, TX 79704
(432) 686-6600

Our Promise to You

We are required by law and regulation to protect the privacy of your medical information, to provide you with this notice of our privacy practices with respect to protected health information, and to abide by the terms of the notice of privacy practices in effect.

This notice is effective on the following date: April 14, 2003

Notice revised: May 1, 2013

We may change our policies and this notice at any time and have those revised policies apply to all the protected health information we maintain. If or when we change our notice, we will post the new notice in the office where it can be seen.