



Carastar Health

Notice of Privacy Practices

This notice describes how medical/health 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 our Privacy Contact, who is the Records Coordinator.

This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how we 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 mental or physical health or condition and related health, which includes mental health care services.

We are required to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices. We may change the terms of our notice, at any time. The new notice will be effective for all protected health information that we maintain at that time. Upon your requests, we will provide you with any revised Notice of Privacy Practices by calling the office and requesting that a revised copy be sent to you in the mail or asking for one at the time of your next appointment.

1. Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information

Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information

We may use and disclose your protected health information for treatment, payment, and health care operations without your permission. Your protected health information may be used and disclosed by your physician, mental health professional, case manager, our office staff, and others outside of our office that are involved in your care and treatment for the purpose of providing health care services to you. Your protected health information may also be used and disclosed to pay your health care bills and to support the operation of the organization's practice.

Following are examples of the types of uses and disclosures of your protected health care information that the organization's office is permitted to make without written authorization. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive, but to describe the types of uses and disclosures that may be made by our office once you have provided consent.

Treatment: We will 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, we would disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to a home health, social service, and/or service provider agency or individual that provides care to you. We will also disclose protected health information to other physicians, organizations, or individuals who may be treating or providing services to you when we have the necessary permission from you to disclose your protected health information. For example, your protected health information may be provided to a physician or provider of services to whom you have been referred to ensure that the physician or provider of services has the necessary information to diagnose, treat, or provide services to you. In addition, we may disclose your protected health information from time-to-time to another physician or health care provider (e.g., a specialist or laboratory) who, at the request of your physician or mental health provider becomes involved in your care by providing assistance with your health care diagnosis or treatment to your physician or mental health provider.

Payment: Your protected health information will be used, as needed, to obtain payment for your healthcare services. This may include certain activities that your health insurance plan or payer of services may undertake before it approves or pays for the health care services we recommend for you such as; making a determination of eligibility or coverage for insurance benefits or payment benefits, reviewing services provided to you for medical necessity, and undertaking utilization review activities. For example, obtaining approval for a hospital stay may require that your relevant protected health information be disclosed to the health plan to obtain approval for the hospital admission.

Healthcare Operations: We may use or disclose, as needed, your protected health information in order to support the business activities of the organization's practice. These activities include, but are not limited to, quality assessment activities, performance improvement activities, employee review activities, training of students, licensing, certification, marketing, and fundraising activities, and conducting or arranging for other business activities. For example, we may disclose your protected health information to intern or practicum students who see clients at our office. In addition, we may use a sign-in sheet at the registration desk where you will be asked to sign your name and indicate the service provider or program. We may also call you by name in the waiting room when your provider is ready to see you. We may use or disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to contact you to remind you of your appointment. We will share your protected health information with third party "business associates" that perform various activities (e.g., billing, transcription services) for the organization. Whenever an arrangement between our office and a business associate involves the use or disclosure of your protected health information, we will have a written contract that contains terms that will protect the privacy of your protected health information. We may use or disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to provide you with information about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you. We may also use and disclose your protected health information for other marketing activities. For example, your name and address may be used to send you a newsletter about our organization and the services we offer. We may also send you information about products or services that we believe may be beneficial to you. You may contact our Privacy Contact to request that these materials not be sent to you. We may use or disclose your demographic information and the dates that you

received treatment from your provider of services, as necessary, in order to contact you for fundraising activities supported by our office. If you do not want to receive these materials, please contact our Privacy Contact and request that these fundraising materials not be sent to you.

Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information Based upon 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 your provider of services or the organization has taken an action in reliance on the use or disclosure indicated in the authorization.

Other Permitted and Required Uses and Disclosures That May Be Made With Your Consent, Authorization or Opportunity to Object

We 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 staff of the organization or your service provider 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.

Others Involved in Your Healthcare: Unless you object, we 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, we may disclose such information as necessary if we determine that it is in your best interest based on our professional judgment. We 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, we 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.

Emergencies: We may use or disclose your protected health information in an emergency treatment situation. If this happens, the staff shall try to obtain your consent; however, if the staff are unable to gain your consent, then only the protected health information necessary to provide services, or to obtain services, for you will be disclosed.

Communication Barriers: We may use and disclose your protected health information if your service provider or another provider in the organization attempts to obtain consent from you but is unable to do so due to substantial communication barriers and the provider determines, using professional judgment, that you intend to consent to use or disclosure under the circumstances.

Other Permitted and Required Uses and Disclosures That May Be Made Without Your Consent, Authorization or Opportunity to Object

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

Required By Law: We may use or disclose your protected health information to the extent that the use or disclosure is required by law. The use or disclosure will be made in compliance with the law and will be limited to the relevant requirements of the law. You will be notified, as required by law, of any such uses or disclosures.

Public Health: We may disclose your protected health information for public health activities and purpose 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. We 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.

Communicable Diseases: We 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 or condition.

Health (Services) Oversight: We may disclose protected health information to health, mental health, social services, or legal oversight agencies for activities authorized by law, such as certification site visits, advocacy services, audits, investigations, and inspections. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies that oversee the health or mental health care system, social service system, government benefit programs, other government regulatory programs, and civil rights laws.

Abuse or Neglect: We may disclose your protected health information to public health, mental health, social services, advocacy, or legal authorities that is authorized by law to receive reports of abuse or neglect. In addition, we may disclose your protected health information if we believe that you have been a victim of abuse or neglect to the governmental entities or agencies authorized to receive such information. In this case, the disclosure will be made consistent with the requirements of applicable federal and state laws, regulations, and orders.

Food and Drug Administration: We 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.

Legal Proceedings: We may disclose protected health information in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding, in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process.

Law Enforcement: We 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 the premises of the organization, and (6) medical or mental health emergency (not on the Practice's premises) and it is likely that a crime has occurred.

Coroners, Funeral Directors, and Organ Donation: We 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 a reasonable anticipation of death. Protected health information may be used and disclosed for cadaver organ, eye or tissue donation purposes.

Research: We 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.

Criminal Activity: Consistent with applicable federal and state laws, we may disclose your protected health information, if we believe 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. We may also disclose protected health information if it is necessary for law enforcement authorities to identify or apprehend an individual.

Military Activity and National Security: When the appropriate conditions apply, we 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 a foreign military authority if you are a member of their foreign military services. We 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.

Worker's Compensation: Your protected health information may be disclosed by us as authorized to comply with worker's compensation laws and other similar legally-established programs.

Inmate: We may use or disclose your protected health information if you are an inmate of a correctional facility and your service provider created or received your protected health information in the course of providing care to you.

To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety: Your protected health information may be disclosed when necessary to prevent a threat to your health and safety, or the health and safety of the public or another person. Efforts will be made to disclose any threat to a specific person and to an appropriate law enforcement agency.

Required Uses and Disclosures: Under the law, we must make disclosures to you and when required by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to investigate or determine our compliance with the requirements of Section 164.500 et. Seq.

2. Your Rights

Following is a statement of your rights with respect to your protected health information and a brief description of how you may exercise these rights.

You have the 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 we maintain the protected health information. A "designated record set" contains medical/mental health/services and billing records and any other records that your service provider and the organization uses for making decisions about you.

Under federal law, however, you may not inspect or copy the following records; psychotherapy notes (professional's personal 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. The staff may deny access for certain conditions which include, but not limited to, the information may be harmful to you or present a threat of physical harm to a third party. Depending on the circumstances, a decision to deny access may be reviewable. You have a right to have this decision reviewed by following the Complaint Procedure. Please contact our Privacy Contact if you have questions or want to follow the Complaint Procedure regarding denial of access to records.

You have the right to request a restriction of your protected health information. This means you may ask us not to use or disclose any part of your protected health information for the purposes of treatment, payment, or health care 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 the Notice of Privacy Practices. Your request must state the specific restriction requested and to whom you want the restriction to apply.

Your service provider is not required to agree to a restriction that you may request. If the staff believes 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 your service provider does agree to the requested restriction, we 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 your service provider. You may request a restriction by writing the specific restriction requested.

You have the right to request to receive confidential communications from us by alternative means or at an alternative location. We will accommodate reasonable requests. We 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. We will not request an explanation from you as to the basis for the request. Please make this request in writing to our Privacy Contact.

You may have the right to have the organization or service provider amend 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 we maintain this information. In certain cases, we may deny your request for an amendment. If we deny your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us and we may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and will provide you with a copy of any such rebuttal. Please contact our Privacy Contact to determine if you have questions about amending your medical or mental health record.

You have the right to receive an accounting of certain disclosures we have made, if any, 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 disclosure we may have made to you, for a facility directory, 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 occurred after April 14, 2003. You may request a shorter timeframe. The right to receive this information is subject to certain exceptions, restrictions and limitations.

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

3. Complaints

You may complain to us or to the Secretary of Health and Human Services if you believe your privacy rights have been violated by us. You may file a complaint with us by notifying our Privacy Contact of your complaint. We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

You may contact our Administrative Office at (334) 279-7830 for further information about the complaint process. This notice was originally published and became effective on April 14, 2003 and was last updated June 1, 2022.