

# 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 notice contains important information about the privacy of your medical information. If you need this notice in another language or someone to interpret, please contact your local county assistance office. Language assistance will be provided free of charge.

Este aviso contiene información importante acerca de la privacidad de su información médica. Si necesita este aviso en otro idioma o alguien para que interprete, comuníquese con la Oficina de Asistencia de su Condado. La asistencia bilingüe será gratuita.

Данное уведомление содержит важные сведения относительно конфиденциальности вашей медицинской информации. Если вам нужно данное уведомление на другом языке или вам нужны услуги устного переводчика, обращайтесь в Бюро помощи вашего округа (County Assistance Office). Переводческие услуги предоставляются бесплатно.

此通知包括关于您的医疗信息的个人隐私方面的重要资料。如果您需要此通知译成其它语言或需要有人替您翻译，请联系您所在地区的郡县援助办事处。可提供免费语言协助。

Thông báo này gồm những thông tin quan trọng về việc bảo mật các chi tiết y tế cá nhân của quý vị. Nếu cần có thông báo này bằng một ngôn ngữ khác hay người để thông dịch, xin quý vị liên lạc với Văn Phòng Trợ Cấp Địa Phương. Trợ giúp ngôn ngữ sẽ được cung cấp miễn phí.

សំបុត្រនេះមានព័ត៌មានសំខាន់ៗអំពីការអភិរក្សភាពសម្ងាត់ព័ត៌មានពេទ្យរបស់លោកអ្នក។ បើលោកអ្នកត្រូវការសំបុត្រនេះ ជាភាសាផ្សេងទៀត ឬត្រូវការអ្នកបកប្រែសំបុត្រនេះ ជាភាសាផ្សេងទៀត សូមទាក់ទងការិយាល័យដើម្បីរបស់លោកអ្នក។ ជំនួយខាងភាសាទាំងនេះអាចផ្តល់ឱ្យលោកអ្នកឥតគិតថ្លៃ។

يحتوي هذا الإخطار على معلومات هامة حول خصوصية المعلومات الطبية المتعلقة بك. إذا كنت بحاجة إلى هذا الإخطار بلغة أخرى أو إلى شخص ما لترجمته لك، فيرجى الاتصال بمكتب معونة المقاطعة المحلي. وستقدم المساعدة اللغوية مجاناً.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) provides and pays for many types of benefits and social services. We also determine an individual's eligibility to receive benefits and services. To do these things, we have to collect personal and health information about you and/or your family. The information we collect about you and/or your family is private. We call this information "protected health information."

DHS does not use or disclose DHS health information unless it is permitted or required by law. DHS is required by law to maintain the privacy of protected health information, to provide individuals with notice of its legal duties and privacy practices concerning protected health information and to notify affected individuals in the case of a breach of unsecured protected health information. As a "covered entity," DHS must follow applicable laws protecting the privacy of your protected health information which include the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) privacy rules. Under HIPAA, Medicaid agencies, certain health plans and health care providers are examples of covered entities that must comply with HIPAA. Other laws that may apply include rules concerning confidential information about Medical Assistance, other benefits, behavioral health, substance abuse/treatment and HIV/AIDS. When we use or disclose protected health information, we make every reasonable effort to limit its use or disclosure to the minimum necessary to accomplish the intended purpose. This notice explains your right to privacy of your protected health information and how we may use and disclose that information. For more information on DHS privacy practices, or to receive another copy of this notice, please contact us. For information on how to contact us, see the "Questions or Complaints" section on the last page of this notice.

We are required by law to follow the terms of this notice. We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all protected health information we maintain. If we make an important change in our privacy policies or procedures, we will post a revised copy of the notice on our website and/or provide you with a new privacy notice by mail or in person. You may request and receive a paper copy of this notice at any time.

### What is protected health information?

Protected health information is information about you that relates to a past, present or future physical or mental health condition, treatment or payment for treatment, and that can be used to identify you. This information includes any information, whether verbal or recorded in any form, that is created or received by DHS or persons or organizations that contract with DHS. This includes electronic information and information in any other form or medium that could identify you, for example:

- |                                       |                        |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Your name (or names of your children) | Telephone number       |
| Address                               | DHS case number        |
| Date of birth                         | Social Security number |
| Admission/discharge date              | Medical procedure code |
| Diagnostic code                       |                        |

## Who sees and shares my health information?

DHS professionals (such as caseworkers and other county assistance office and program staff) and people outside of DHS (such as our contractors, health maintenance organization (HMO) staff, nurses, doctors, therapists, social workers and administrators) may see and use your health information to determine your eligibility for benefits, treatment, payment or for other required or permitted reasons. Sharing your health information may relate to services and benefits you had before, receive now, or may receive later. DHS will not use or share genetic information about you when deciding if you are eligible for Medicaid.

## Why is my protected health information used and disclosed by DHS?

There are different reasons why we may use or disclose your protected health information. The law says that we may use or disclose information without your consent or authorization for the reasons described below.

**For Treatment:** We may use or disclose information so that you can receive medical treatment or services. For example, we may disclose information your doctor, hospital or therapist needs to know to give you quality care and to coordinate your treatment with others helping with your care.

**For Payment:** We may use or disclose information to pay for your treatment and other services. For example, we may exchange information about you with your doctor, hospital, nursing home, or another government agency to pay the bills for your treatment and services.

**For Operating Our Programs:** We may use or disclose information in the course of our ordinary business as we manage our various programs. For example, we may use your health information to contact you to provide information about appointments, health-related information and benefits and services. We may also review information we receive from your doctor, hospital, nursing home and other health care providers to review how our programs are working or to review the need for and quality of health care services provided to you and/or your family.

**For Public Health Activities:** We report public health information to other government agencies concerning such things as contagious diseases, immunization information, and the tracking of some diseases such as cancer.

**For Law Enforcement Purposes and As Required by Legal Proceedings:** We will disclose information to the police or other law enforcement authorities as required by court order.

**For Government Programs:** We may disclose information to a provider, government agency or other organization that needs to know if you are enrolled in one of our programs or receiving benefits under other programs such as the Workers' Compensation Program.

**For National Security:** We may disclose information requested by the federal government when they are investigating something important to protect our country.

**For Public Health and Safety:** We may disclose information to prevent serious threats to health or safety of a person or the public.

**For Research:** We may disclose information for permitted research purposes and to develop reports. These reports do not identify specific people.

**For Coroners, Funeral Directors and Organ Donation:** We may disclose information to a coroner or medical examiner for identification purposes, cause of death determinations, organ donation and related reasons. We may also disclose information to funeral directors to carry out funeral-related duties.

**For Reasons Otherwise Required By Law:** DHS may use or disclose your protected health information to the extent that the use or disclosure is otherwise required by law. The use or disclosure is made in compliance with the law and is limited to the requirements of the law.

## Do other laws also protect certain health information about me?

DHS also follows other federal and state laws that provide additional privacy protections for the use and disclosure of information about you. For example, if we have HIV or substance abuse information, with a few exceptions, we may not release it without special, signed written permission that complies with the law. In some situations, the law also requires us to obtain written permission before we use or release information concerning mental health or intellectual disabilities and certain other information.

## Can I ask DHS to use or disclose my health information?

Sometimes, you may need or want to have your protected health information sent or otherwise disclosed to someone or somewhere for reasons other than treatment, payment, operating our programs, or other permitted or required purpose not needing your written authorization. If so, you may be asked to sign an authorization form, allowing us to send or otherwise disclose your protected health care information as you request.

The authorization form tells us what, where and to whom the information will be sent or otherwise disclosed. You may revoke your authorization or limit the amount of information to be disclosed at any time by letting us know in writing, except to the extent that DHS has already taken action in reliance upon the authorization.

If you are younger than 18 years old and, by law, you are able to consent for your own health care, then you will have control of that health information. You may ask to have your health information sent to any person who is helping you with your health care.

Except as described in this Notice, we will not use or disclose your health information without your written authorization. For example, HIPAA generally requires written authorization before a covered entity may use or disclose an individual's psychotherapy notes. In most cases, HIPAA also requires written authorization before a covered entity may use or disclose protected health information for marketing purposes or before it sells it.

## What are my rights regarding my health information?

As a DHS client, you have the following rights regarding your protected health information that we use and disclose:

**Right to See and Copy Your Health Information:** You have the right to see most of your protected health information and to receive a copy of it. If you want copies of information you have a right to see, you may be charged a small fee. However, generally, you may not see or receive a copy of: (1) psychotherapy notes; or (2) information that may not be released to you under federal law.

If we deny your request for protected health information, we will provide you a written explanation for the denial and your rights regarding the denial.

DHS does not receive or keep a file of all of your protected health information. Doctors, hospitals, nursing homes and other health care providers (including an HMO, if you are enrolled in one) may also have your protected health information. You also have a right to your health information through your doctor or other provider who has these records.

**Right to Correct or Add Information:** If you think some of the protected health information we have is wrong, you may ask us in writing to correct or add new information. You may ask us to send the corrected or new information to others who have received your health information from us. In certain cases, we may deny your request to correct or add information. If we deny your request, we will provide you a written explanation of why we denied your request. We will also explain what you can do if you disagree with our decision.

**Right to Receive a List of Disclosures:** You have the right to receive a list of where your protected health information has been sent, unless it was sent for purposes relating to treatment, payment, operating our programs, or if the law says we are not required to add the disclosure to the list. For example, the law does not require us to add to the list any disclosures we may have made to you, to family or persons involved in your care, to others you have authorized us to disclose to, or for information disclosed before April 14, 2003.

**Right to Request Restrictions on Use and Disclosure:** You have the right to ask us to restrict the use and disclosure of your protected health information. We may not be able to agree to your request. In fact, in some situations, we are not permitted to restrict the use or disclosure of the information. If we cannot comply with your request, we will tell you why. Except as otherwise required by law, we must grant your request to restrict disclosure to a health plan if the purpose of disclosure is not for treatment and the medical services to which the request applies have been paid out-of-pocket in full.

**Right to Request Confidential Communication:** You may ask us to communicate with you in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you may ask us to contact you only by mail.

**Right to Receive Notification of a Breach:** You have the right to receive notification if there is a breach of your unsecured protected health information

## Whom do I contact about my rights or to ask questions about this notice?

You can contact the DHS HIPAA helpline, toll-free at 800-692-7462 to discuss your rights or to ask questions about this notice. You can also contact your caseworker or health care provider or write to DHS's Privacy Office, 3rd Floor West, Health and Welfare Building, 7th and Forster Streets, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

You can receive important information or updates to this notice by visiting DHS's Web site at [www.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.dhs.pa.gov).

## How do I file a complaint?

You may contact either office listed below if you want to file a complaint about how DHS has used or disclosed information about you. There is no penalty for filing a complaint. Your benefits will not be affected or changed if you file a complaint. DHS and its employees and contractors cannot and will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES PRIVACY OFFICE  
3RD FLOOR WEST, HEALTH AND WELFARE BUILDING  
7TH AND FORSTER STREETS  
HARRISBURG, PA 17120

REGION III  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS  
150 S. INDEPENDENCE MALL WEST - SUITE 372  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19106-9111

**Effective: April, 2003 – Revised July 28, 2015**



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES