

LUTHERAN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF ILLINOIS
NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

This Notice is effective September 23, 2013

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION.
PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY

WE ARE REQUIRED BY LAW TO PROTECT HEALTH (WHICH INCLUDES MENTAL HEALTH) INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

We, Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois ("LCFS") are required by law to protect the privacy of health information about you and that identifies you. This health information may be information about healthcare (including mental health) we provide to you or payment for healthcare provided to you. It may also be information about your past, present, or future health condition.

We are also required by law to provide you with this Notice of Privacy Practices explaining our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to health information. We are legally required to follow the terms of this Notice. In other words, we are only allowed to use and disclose health information in the manner that we have described in this Notice.

We may change the terms of this Notice in the future. We reserve the right to make changes and to make the new Notice effective for *all* health information that we maintain. If we make changes to the Notice, we will:

- Post the new Notice in our waiting area.
- Have copies of the new Notice available upon request. Please contact any of our offices or contact our Privacy Officer at (708)771-7180 to obtain a copy of our current Notice).

The rest of this Notice will:

- Discuss how we may use and disclose health information about you.
- Explain your rights with respect to health information about you.
- Describe how and where you may file a privacy-related complaint.

If, at any time, you have questions about information in this Notice or about our privacy policies, procedures or practices, you can contact our Privacy Officer at (708)771-7180.

WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU IN SEVERAL CIRCUMSTANCES

We use and disclose health information about clients every day. This section of our Notice explains in some detail how we may use and disclose health (including mental health) information about you in order to provide healthcare, obtain payment for that healthcare, and operate our business efficiently. This section then briefly mentions several other circumstances in which we may use or disclose health information about you. For more information about any of these uses or disclosures, or about any of our privacy policies, procedures or practices, contact our Privacy Officer at (708)771-7180.

1. Treatment

We may use and disclose health information about you to provide healthcare treatment to you. In other words, we may use and disclose health information about you to provide, coordinate or manage your

healthcare and related services. This may include communicating with other healthcare providers regarding your treatment and coordinating and managing your healthcare with others.

Example: Jane is a client of LCFS. The intake worker /receptionist may use health information about Jane when setting up an appointment for individual counseling. The therapist will obtain health information about Jane when providing counseling, and if the therapist concludes that Jane should be referred to specialist, the therapist or may disclose health information about Jane to the specialist to assist the specialist in providing appropriate care to Jane.

2. Payment

LCFS may use and disclose health information about you to obtain payment for healthcare services that you received. This means that, within LCFS, we may *use* health information about you to arrange for payment (such as preparing bills and managing accounts). We also may *disclose* health information about you to others (such as insurers, collection agencies, and consumer reporting agencies). In some instances, we may disclose health information about you to an insurance plan *before* you receive certain healthcare services because, for example, we may need to know whether the insurance plan will pay for a particular service.

Example: Jane is a client of LCFS and she has private insurance. The LCFS billing department will *use* health information about Jane when it prepares a bill for the services provided. Health information about Jane will be *disclosed* to her insurance company when the billing clerk sends in the bill.

Example: Jack is a ward of the state and services are arranged for Jack with LCFS by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (“DCFS”). The LCFS billing department may contact DCFS before the providing treatment to determine whether the costs of such treatment are authorized.

3. Service Operations

We may use and disclose health information about you in performing a variety of business activities that we call “healthcare operations.” These “healthcare operations” activities allow us to, for example, improve the quality of care we provide and reduce costs. For example, we may use or disclose health information about you in performing the following activities:

- Reviewing and evaluating the skills, qualifications, and performance of healthcare providers taking care of you.
- Providing training programs for students, trainees, healthcare providers or non-healthcare professionals to help them practice or improve their skills.
- Cooperating with outside organizations that evaluate, certify or license healthcare providers, staff or facilities in a particular field or specialty.
- Reviewing and improving the quality, efficiency and cost of care that we provide to you and our other clients.
- Improving care and lowering costs for groups of people who have similar problems and helping manage and coordinate the care for these groups of people.
- Cooperating with outside organizations that assess the quality of the care others and we provide, including government agencies and private organizations.
- Planning for our organization’s future operations.
- Resolving grievances within our organization.
- Reviewing our activities and using or disclosing health information in the event that control of our organization significantly changes.
- Working with others (such as lawyers, accountants and other providers) who assist us to comply with this Notice and other applicable laws.

Example: Jack complained that he did not receive appropriate care. DCFS reviewed Jack’s record to evaluate the quality of the care provided to Jack. DCFS also discussed Jack’s care with an attorney.

4. Persons Involved in Your Care

We may disclose health information about you to a relative, close personal friend or any other person you authorize to be involved in your care and the information is relevant to your care. If the client is a minor,

we may disclose health information about the minor to a parent, guardian or other person responsible for the minor except in limited circumstances. For more information on the privacy of minors' information, contact our Privacy Officer at (708)771-7180.

We may also use or disclose health information about you to a relative, another person involved in your care or possibly a governmental agency if, for your protection, we need to notify someone about your location or condition.

You may ask us at any time not to disclose health information about you to persons involved in your care. We will agree to your request and not disclose the information except in certain limited circumstances (such as emergencies) or if the client is a minor. If the client is a minor, we may or may not be able to agree to your request.

Example: Jane's spouse regularly comes to LCFS with Jane for her appointments and helps her with fulfilling the requirement of the plan set up for her. When the caseworker is discussing the plan with Jane, Jane invites her spouse to come into the private room. The caseworker discusses the plan requirements with Jane and Jane's spouse..

5. Required by Law

We will use and disclose health information about you whenever we are required by law to do so. There are many state and federal laws that require us to use and disclose health information. For example, the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act requires that records be disclosed in probate court proceedings when the issue is competency or need for a guardianship. We will comply with those state laws and with all other applicable laws.

6. National Priority Uses and Disclosures

When permitted by law, we may use or disclose health information about you without your permission for various activities that are recognized as "national priorities." In other words, the government has determined that under certain circumstances (described below), it is so important to disclose health information that it is acceptable to disclose health information without the individual's permission. We will only disclose health information about you in the following circumstances when we are permitted to do so by law. Below are brief descriptions of the "national priority" activities recognized by law.

- **Threat to health or safety:** We may use or disclose health information about you if we believe it is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious threat to health or safety.
- **Public health activities:** We may use or disclose health information about you for public health activities. Public health activities require the use of health information for various activities, including, but not limited to, activities related to investigating and reporting child abuse and neglect, monitoring drugs or devices regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, and monitoring work-related illnesses or injuries. For example, if you have been exposed to a communicable disease (such as a sexually transmitted disease), we may report it to the State and take other actions to prevent the spread of the disease.
- **Abuse, neglect or domestic violence:** We may disclose health information about you to a government authority (such as DCFS) if we reasonably believe that you may be a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.
- **Health oversight activities:** We may disclose health information about you to a health oversight agency – which is basically an agency responsible for overseeing the healthcare system or certain government programs. For example, a government agency may request information from us while they are investigating possible insurance fraud.
- **Court proceedings:** We may disclose health information about you to a court or an officer of the court (such as an attorney). For example, we would disclose health information about you to a court if a judge orders us to do so.
- **Law enforcement:** We may disclose health information about you to a law enforcement official for specific law enforcement purposes. For example, we may disclose limited health information about you to a police officer if the officer needs the information to help find or identify a missing person.

- **Coroners and others:** We may disclose health information about you to a coroner, health examiner, or funeral director or to organizations that help with organ, eye and tissue transplants.
- **Research organizations:** We may use or disclose health information about you to research organizations if the organization has satisfied certain conditions about protecting the privacy of health information.

7. Authorizations

Other than the uses and disclosures described above (#1-6), we will not use or disclose health information about you without the “authorization” – or signed permission – of you or your personal representative. In some instances, we may wish to use or disclose health information about you and we may contact you to ask you to sign an authorization form. In other instances, you may contact us to ask us to disclose health information and we will ask you to sign an authorization form.

If you sign a written authorization allowing us to disclose health information about you, you may later revoke (or cancel) your authorization in writing (except in very limited circumstances related to obtaining insurance coverage). If you would like to revoke your authorization, you may write us a letter revoking your authorization or fill out an Authorization Revocation Form. Authorization Revocation Forms are available from our Privacy Officer. If you revoke your authorization, we will follow your instructions except to the extent that we have already relied upon your authorization and taken some action.

The following uses and disclosures of health information about you will only be made with your authorization (signed permission):

- Uses and disclosures for marketing purposes.
- Uses and disclosures that constitute the sales of health information about you.
- Most uses and disclosures of psychotherapy notes.
- Any other uses and disclosures not described in this Notice.

**YOU HAVE RIGHTS WITH RESPECT
TO HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU**

You have several rights with respect to health information about you. This section of the Notice will briefly mention each of these rights. If you would like to know more about your rights, please contact our Privacy Officer at (708)771-7180.

1. Right to a Copy of This Notice

You have a right to have a paper copy of our Notice of Privacy Practices at any time. In addition, a copy of this Notice will always be posted in our waiting area. If you would like to have a copy of our Notice, ask the receptionist at any of our offices or contact our Privacy Officer at (708)771-7180.

2. Right of Access to Inspect and Copy

You have the right to inspect (which means see or review) and receive a copy of health information about you that we maintain in certain groups of records. If we maintain your health records in an Electronic Health Record (EHR) system, you may obtain an electronic copy of your health records. You may also instruct us in writing to send an electronic copy of your health records to a third party. If you would like to inspect or receive a copy of health information about you, you must provide us with a request in writing. You may write us a letter requesting access or fill out an **Authorization for Release Information Form**, which is available from our Privacy Officer.

We may deny your request in certain circumstances. If we deny your request, we will explain our reason for doing so in writing. We will also inform you in writing if you have the right to have our decision reviewed by another person.

If you would like a copy of the health information about you, we will charge you a reasonable fee to cover the costs associated with producing the copies, based on an assessment of such factors as the costs of

equipment and supplies, employee costs, and administrative overhead and postage (including express mail or courier costs) when incurred at your request. Our fees for electronic copies of your health records will be limited to the direct labor costs associated with fulfilling your request.

We may be able to provide you with a specific amount and explanation of the fees. Contact our Privacy Officer at (708)771-7180 for more information on this.

3. Right to Have Health Information Amended

You have the right to have us amend (which means correct or supplement) health information about you that we maintain in certain groups of records. If you believe that we have information that is either inaccurate or incomplete, we may amend the information to indicate the problem and notify others who have copies of the inaccurate or incomplete information. If you would like us to amend information, you must provide us with a request in writing and explain why you would like us to amend the information. You may either write us a letter requesting an amendment or fill out an **Amendment Request Form**. Amendment Request Forms are available from our Privacy Officer.

We may deny your request in certain circumstances. If we deny your request, we will explain our reason for doing so in writing. You will have the opportunity to send us a statement explaining why you disagree with our decision to deny your amendment request and we will share your statement whenever we disclose the information in the future.

4. Right to an Accounting of Disclosures We Have Made

You have the right to receive an accounting (which means a detailed listing) of disclosures that we have made for the previous six (6) years. If you would like to receive an accounting, you may send us a letter requesting an accounting, fill out an **Accounting Request Form**, or contact our Privacy Officer. Accounting Request Forms are available from our Privacy Officer.

The accounting will not include several types of disclosures, including disclosures for treatment, payment or healthcare operations. If we maintain your health records in an Electronic Health Record (EHR) system, you may request that include disclosures for treatment, payment or healthcare operations. The accounting will also not include disclosures made prior to April 14, 2003.

If you request an accounting more than once every twelve (12) months, we may charge you a fee to cover the costs of preparing the accounting.

5. Right to Request Restrictions on Uses and Disclosures

You have the right to request that we limit the use and disclosure of health information about you for treatment, payment and healthcare operations. Under federal law, we must agree to your request and comply with your requested restriction(s) if:

1. Except as otherwise required by law, the disclosure is to a health plan for purpose of carrying out payment of healthcare operations (and is not for purposes of carrying out treatment); and,
2. The health information pertains solely to a healthcare item or service for which the healthcare provided involved has been paid out-of-pocket in full.

Once we agree to your request, we must follow your restrictions (except if the information is necessary for emergency treatment). You may cancel the restrictions at any time. In addition, we may cancel a restriction at any time as long as we notify you of the cancellation and continue to apply the restriction to information collected before the cancellation.

You also have the right to request that we restrict disclosures of your health information and healthcare treatment(s) to a health plan (health insurer) or other party, when that information relates solely to a healthcare item or service for which you, or another person on your behalf (other than a health plan), has paid us for in full. Once you have requested such restriction(s), and your payment in full has been received, we must follow your restriction(s).

6. Right to Request an Alternative Method of Contact

You have the right to request to be contacted at a different location or by a different method. For example, you may prefer to have all written information mailed to your work address rather than to your home address.

We will agree to any reasonable request for alternative methods of contact. If you would like to request an alternative method of contact, you must provide us with a request in writing. You may write us a letter or fill out an **Alternative Contact Request Form**. Alternative Contact Request Forms are available from our Privacy Officer.

7. Right to Notification if a Breach of Your Health Information Occurs

You also have the right to be notified in the event of a breach of health information about you. If a breach of your health information occurs and if that information is unsecured (not encrypted), we will notify you promptly with the following information:

- A brief description of what happened;
- A description of the health information that was involved;
- Recommended steps you can take to protect yourself from harm;
- What steps we are taking in response to the breach; and,
- Contact procedures so you can obtain further information.

8. Right to Opt-Out of Fundraising Communications

If we conduct fundraising and we use communications like the U.S. Postal Service or electronic email for fundraising, you have the right to opt-out of receiving such communications from us. Please contact our Privacy Officer to opt-out of fundraising communications if you chose to do so.

**YOU MAY FILE A COMPLAINT
ABOUT OUR PRIVACY PRACTICES**

If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated or if you are dissatisfied with our privacy policies or procedures, you may file a written complaint either with us or with the federal government.

We will not take any action against you or change our treatment of you in any way if you file a complaint.

To file a written complaint with us, you may bring your complaint directly to our Privacy Officer, or you may mail it to the following address:

Privacy Officer
Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois
One Oakbrook Terrace, Suite 501
Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois 60181

To file a written complaint with the federal government, please use the following contact information:

Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201

Toll-Free Phone: 1-(877) 696-6775

Website: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/index.html>

Email: OCRComplaint@hhs.gov