



NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

The Village for Families & Children, Inc. (“The Village”) commits to protect the privacy of your health information, as required by law. This Notice describes what we do to protect the use and sharing of your protected health information (PHI).

I. WHAT IS PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION?

Protected Health Information (PHI) includes all health information that could identify you. It includes things like your name, address, and phone number, and also information about your health, including why you came to The Village. All forms of PHI are protected, including things written on paper, stored in a computer, or spoken by someone. Some health information maintained by The Village relates to the diagnosis, treatment, or referral for treatment of substance use disorders (SUD). These records are protected by federal law (42 CFR Part 2), which provides greater privacy protection than HIPAA alone. The Village and its business partners are almost always required to keep PHI private. The times we can share your PHI are listed below in section IV.

II. YOUR PRIVACY RIGHTS

Minimum necessary. The Village will use or share the least amount of your PHI that is needed for any purpose. Only those Village workers who need to see and use your PHI are allowed to see it. You can ask us to share your PHI with other agencies or people, and we will send the minimum needed to satisfy that request. If the reason for sending the PHI is for your treatment or care, we may send more to make certain you get the best care.

Right to Access and Amend. As an adult client or the parent/guardian of a client, you have the right to review and get a copy of your medical or behavioral health records. That includes other written information that may be used to make decisions about your care. (There are some exceptions to this right, listed below.) You also have the right to request that we amend the record, although we are not required to do so.

If you ask us in writing for a copy of your record, we will give it to you within 30 business days. If we make copies for you, we may charge a reasonable fee for our costs to copy and mail the information you requested. We may deny your request to inspect or receive copies in certain circumstances, such as if we believe the information would be misunderstood or misused. If you are denied access to health information, in some cases you have a right to request a review of the denial.

Confidential communications. The Village will follow reasonable requests about confidential communication. For example, we will ask you how you want to receive appointment reminders and other messages, we will contact you at the telephone number, address or email address you provide.

Use and disclosure of protected information subject to an agreed upon restriction. You have the right to ask us to restrict or limit the PHI we use or give to others. You have additional rights related to substance use disorder records, including the right to request restrictions on certain disclosures, as permitted by law. You can ask us to limit the PHI only to:

- information needed for treatment, payment or health care operations
- information given to persons involved in your health care
- payment for your health care
- telling your family members or others about your general condition, location, or death.

The Village does not have to agree to your requests, however. For example, we may agree not to tell your insurance company about a service or treatment that you paid for yourself. We may not agree if you ask us not to tell them about a service the insurance company would pay for, however.

A copy of this Notice. You have the right to get a paper copy of this Notice at any time. The Village may update or revise this notice at any time to make sure it is consistent with any changes to laws and regulations. You can find the current version of this Notice on The Village website at www.thevillage.org.

Notice of Breach: The Village is required by law to maintain the privacy of your PHI and to notify you if your PHI is given out as a result of a breach. If a breach occurs involving unsecured protected health information, including substance use disorder records, The Village will notify you and applicable government authorities as required by federal law.

Complaint: You may file a complaint if you think we used or shared your PHI incorrectly. Please send your complaint in writing so we have a record of it. Send the complaint to:

Associate Vice President of Risk Management and Compliance
1680 Albany Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105

You also may file a complaint with the Secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services. There will be no retaliation against you in any way for filing a complaint.

Accounting of Disclosures. The Village will keep track of all times we share your PHI, if we do. The record will include the date we shared the PHI, the name and address we shared it with, a description of what we shared, and the reason we shared it. If you ask us in writing, we will show you every instance in which we shared your PHI. We will give you that record within 30 days after you ask for it.

Marketing. Sometimes we ask people to be in our marketing materials. You have the right to decide whether or not to do that. We will only use your information if you give us written permission.

III. USE OF YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

Both Federal and State laws set rules on how we create, obtain, handle, protect and destroy your PHI. The Village will follow all of those rules to protect your confidentiality. The laws that apply are:

Federal

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 ("HIPAA")

Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health ("HITECH") Act

State

Connecticut General Statute 17a-28

Substance use disorder records may be used or disclosed for treatment, payment, and health care operations only with your written consent or as otherwise permitted by 42 CFR Part 2.

Under these laws, The Village may use your Protected Health Information:

For Treatment: To give you treatment or services, or to work closely with others around your treatment services. Treatment involves one or more providers, such as your clinician or doctors. It can include providers with a third party, such as a hospital or clinic. Treatment can mean several things, including:

- providing health care and related services for you
- coordinating the care and services for you
- managing the care and services
- consultation between providers about your services (or your family member's services)
- consultation about a referral for services from one provider to another

If The Village contracts other people to provide services, they must agree in writing to follow The Village's rules to protect your PHI.

For Payment: To allow The Village to work with payers on financial or administrative activities about your care. Those activities can include:

- coordinating referrals and benefits
- processing claims and payments
- checking on eligibility or enrollment, payment status or other transactions

If you pay in full on the day of your service, we will not use your PHI to seek payment or find out your eligibility or enrollment.

For Other Healthcare Operations: To do other required activities. Those activities can include:

- licensing
- accreditation
- other quality assurance activities.

These actions help us measure how effective we are, and help us prevent health care fraud.

Use of Technology and Automated Tools

We may use secure electronic systems and automated or technology-assisted tools, including software that supports clinical documentation, quality improvement, compliance activities, and administrative functions. These tools operate under strict privacy and security requirements. Our vendors are not permitted to use your information for marketing, product development, or unrelated purposes.

IV. DISCLOSURE OF YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

The Village will only use or share your PHI as permitted or required by law. In most cases, your PHI is shared only if you give written authorization. If you revoke an Authorization, we no longer will use or share your PHI under that Authorization. If we already shared PHI under the Authorization, we will not be able to get it back, however.

The Village may share your protected health information with:

- a. **You, if you are an adult or emancipated minor. (“Emancipated” means legally free from your parent’s control.)**
- b. **Your personal representative.** A personal representative has the legal right to make health care decisions for you. We will verify your representative’s authority to act for you. Then that person may ask us to share your PHI.
- c. **To others that you identify as involved in your care.** You may decide to involve family, relatives, friends or others in your care or treatment. Your records will not be shared with these individuals, unless you ask us to send them.
- d. **Guardian of Minors.** In most cases, parents are the personal representatives for their minor children. That gives them the right to review their children’s medical records. In some rare cases, the parent is not the personal representative. In such cases, The Village staff will follow CT law about guardians. They will use their professional judgment about whether the parent should see the child’s medical record.
- e. **The executor for a deceased client.** An executor is the person who carries out the terms of someone’s will after he/she dies. The Village will make sure the person is the executor, then he/she may ask us to share the deceased person’s PHI.

In some special cases, The Village also may use and share your PHI without your permission. Those cases include:

- a. **Emergencies.** If you are unable to respond (as in an emergency) then we may help emergency personnel by sharing limited PHI that they need.
- b. **Public health activities.** We may report to a public health authority at times. The report is used to help prevent or control disease, injury or harm. The report also serves to report births and deaths.
- c. **Victims of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.** If we believe that you are a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence, we may share your PHI with a government authority.
- d. **Judicial and administrative proceedings.** We may share your PHI in response to a subpoena or court or administrative order.
- e. **Law enforcement purposes.** We will share your PHI for certain reasons involving law enforcement. Those reasons include:
 - complying with a court order, warrant, or similar legal process
 - answering certain requests for information about crimes
 - required reporting when someone may be in danger
 - sharing your PHI with law enforcement or a correctional institution, if you are under their custody. The PHI may be used for your health and safety, or that of others.
 - substance use disorder records may not be disclosed in response to a subpoena, summons, or other legal process unless you provide specific written consent or a court issues an order that complies with 42 CFR Part 2. Substance use disorder records are not disclosed to law enforcement unless permitted by 42 CFR Part 2.
- f. **Military and National Security.** Your PHI may be shared for national intelligence and other security activities.
- g. **Research.** We may use your PHI for research purposes if you consent, or if we remove anything that would identify you. Our Internal Review Board must approve all research projects to make sure your PHI is protected.
- h. **To avert a serious threat to your health or safety, or to the health or safety of the public.** This happens when we believe someone is a danger to self or others.
- i. **Workers' compensation.** As allowed by worker compensation laws or related programs.
- j. **Disaster Relief.** As authorized by law.
- k. **Other uses and disclosures as required by law.**

V. DISCLOSURE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY NOTES, SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND HIV INFORMATION

Some PHI has special protection under the law. This includes:

- psychotherapy notes

- substance abuse information
- HIV-related information
- Substance use disorder records are protected under 42 CFR Part 2 and generally may not be disclosed without written consent or a qualifying court order.

We generally do not share these things unless:

- you sign a specific authorization to give your permission, or
- a court orders us to share, or
- there is a medical emergency and the medical personnel need it, or
- authorities are investigating a crime or suspected child abuse or neglect

We can use psychotherapy notes without your permission for training our staff. We can use PHI to defend the Village if you bring a legal case against us. We also can share information with federal or state authorities or accrediting bodies for various reasons, including:

- to determine if we comply with law and best practices
- to avoid a serious and imminent threat to public health or safety
- for lawful oversight of the person who wrote the psychotherapy notes
- for the lawful activities of a coroner or medical examiner

HIV information may be shared for public health activities that help prevent and control disease. It can be used to reduce exposure to HIV by The Village staff, another person, or a known partner.

VI. VILLAGE RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance Program. The Village trains all its staff to protect your PHI. Anyone who breaks these rules may be sanctioned. If you tell us about concerns with your privacy, we will take it seriously and investigate thoroughly. There will be NO negative consequences toward you for making the report.

Document Retention and Destruction. Your PHI will be maintained securely for 10 years, and then confidentially destroyed.

Safeguarding your protected health information. The Village will use multiple methods to protect all PHI that we hold or use. This includes both technical and physical security, and our standard policies and procedures.

Security Incident. If your PHI is ever used or disclosed improperly, and could cause you harm, we will notify you promptly. We also will notify any public authorities the law requires us to notify. We will notify you as required by law. We will do everything we can to minimize any harm the disclosure might cause for you.

Use and disclosure consistent with notice. The Village will use and share your PHI as stated in this Notice of Privacy Practices. You may have a copy of this Notice, or you may prefer to access it on the Village Website at: www.thevillage.org. I checked the website and did not see this notice. - What is the path to finding this notice?

VII. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT OR OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions about this Notice or want more information about your privacy rights, please contact the Privacy Officer at The Village for Families & Children, Inc.

Associate Vice President of Risk Management and Compliance
The Village for Families & Children, Inc.
1680 Albany Avenue
Hartford, CT. 06105 860-297-0513

Confidential Compliance Hotline
860-297-0513
compliance@thevillage.org