

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.

Southwest C.A.R.E. Center is required by law to maintain the privacy of your health information and to provide you with notice of its legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your health information. If you have questions about any part of this notice or if you want more information about the privacy practices at Southwest C.A.R.E. Center please contact:

Privacy Officer, Michael Morgan
505-989-8200, extension 1014
649 Harkle Road, Suite E
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Effective Date of This Notice: 01/01/2003

I. How SCC may Use or Disclose Your Health Information

Southwest C.A.R.E. Center, hereafter known as SCC, collects health information from you and stores it in a chart and on a computer. These are your medical and social work records. These records are the property of SCC, but the information in the records belongs to you. SCC protects the privacy of your health information. The law permits SCC to use or disclose your health information for the following purposes:

1. Treatment. At SCC, treatment includes medical, mental health, and social work services. Information in your medical or social work chart may be used by staff to monitor your ongoing health care needs. Information may be provided to other professionals also involved in your health care. We may request your permission to include a photo of you in your medical chart for your medical provider's convenience. From time to time, medical or nursing students and/or drug company representatives may wish to sit in on your appointment. You will be asked in advance to grant or deny this.
2. Payment. SCC may exchange information, such as your encounter form, with an outside billing service for the purpose of obtaining or procuring payment on your behalf. From time to time, we may disclose relevant medical records to your health plan. We may use or disclose information from your insurance card to obtain payment or pay on your behalf. We may use or disclose information from your employer such as income verification for your eligibility and enrollment in various programs. Also, SCC may maintain client rosters which may be used by staff and/or disclosed as needed to such organizations as medical laboratories and pharmacies so they can obtain payment. We may provided limited information to organizations such as AID & Comfort New Mexico, Inc. so they can provide financial assistance to you.
3. Regular Health Care Operations. For SCC's normal daily operations, we may use your medical and social work information and data to perform our functions as a health care organization. For example, the New Mexico Department of Health may review records with us for quality assurance. Additionally, we may do statistical analysis in order to provide reports to the various agencies that fund us.
4. Information provided to you. From time to time, we may provide you with a copy of your bill for services rendered. Additionally, we may provide you with information about your medications or treatment.

5. Notification and communication with family. We may disclose your health information to notify or assist in notifying a family member, your personal representative or another person responsible for your care about your location in the event of emergencies or in the event of your death. If you are able and available to agree or object, we will give you the opportunity to object prior to our making this notification. If you are unable or unavailable to agree or object, our health professionals will use their best judgment in communication with your family and others. We will also disclose your health information to those whom you have designated on your Patient Consent and Release form.
6. Required by law. As required by law, we may use and disclose your health information.
7. Public health. As required by law, we may disclose your health information to public health authorities such as the New Mexico State Department of Epidemiology or the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for purposes related to: preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability; reporting child abuse or neglect; reporting domestic violence; reporting to the Food and Drug Administration problems with products and reactions to medications; and reporting disease or infection exposure.
8. Health oversight activities. We may disclose your health information to health agencies such as the New Mexico Department of Health and the New Mexico State Board of Pharmacy during the course of audits, investigations, inspections, licensure and other proceedings.
9. Judicial and administrative proceedings. We may disclose your health information if we are ordered to do so in the course of any administrative or judicial proceeding.
10. Law enforcement. We may disclose your health information to a law enforcement official for purposes such as identifying or locating a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person, complying with a court order or subpoena and other law enforcement purposes.
11. Deceased person information. We may disclose your health information to coroners, medical examiners and funeral directors.
12. Research. If you choose to enroll in a clinical research trial associated with SCC, we may disclose your health information to researchers conducting research that has been approved by an Institutional Review Board or SCC's privacy board. Your health information may be included in SCC's medical research databases, and may be used in retrospective studies where data is not patient-identified.
13. Public safety. We may disclose your health information to appropriate persons in order to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a particular person or the general public.
14. Worker's compensation. We may disclose your health information as necessary to comply with worker's compensation laws.
15. Marketing. We may contact you to provide appointment reminders or to give you information about other treatments, support groups or health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you. From time to time, SCC may review medical records for your potential inclusion in a clinical research trial.
16. Fundraising. We may contact you to participate in fundraising activities for SCC. SCC may maintain a fundraising mailing list that may include you if you have consented in writing to receive mail from us.

17. Change of Ownership. In the event that SCC is sold or merged with another organization, your health information/record will become the property of the new owner.

II. When SCC May Not Use or Disclose Your Health Information

Except as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices, SCC will not use or disclose your health information without your written authorization. If you do authorize SCC to use or disclose your health information for another purpose, you may revoke your authorization in writing at any time.

III. Your Health Information Rights

1. You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of your health information. SCC is not required to agree to the restriction that you requested.
2. You have the right to receive your health information through a reasonable alternative means or at an alternative location. Please alert staff if you have preferences regarding our telephone calls to you, such as not calling you at work or not leaving messages for you. If you have a "caller ID" feature, Southwest C.A.R.E. Center will appear on your caller ID when we call you.
3. You have the right to inspect and copy your health information.
4. You have a right to request that SCC amend your health information that is incorrect or incomplete. SCC is not required to change your health information and will provide you with information about SCC's denial and how you can disagree with the denial.
5. You have a right to receive an accounting of disclosures of your health information made by SCC, except that SCC does not have to account for the disclosures described in parts 1 (treatment), 2 (payment), 3 (health care operations), or 4 (information provided to you) of section I of this Notice of Privacy Practices.
6. You have a right to a paper copy of this Notice of Privacy Practices.

If you would like to have a more detailed explanation of these rights or if you would like to exercise one or more of these rights, contact SCC's Office Manager, Michael Morgan at 505-989-8200, extension 1014, 649 Harkle Road, Suite E, Santa Fe, NM 87505.

IV. Changes to this Notice of Privacy Practices

SCC reserves the right to amend this Notice of Privacy Practices at any time in the future, and to make the new provisions effective for all information that we maintain, including information that was created or received prior to the date of such amendment. Until such amendment is made, SCC is required by law to comply with this Notice. If this notice is changed, SCC will distribute the revised notice in printed form.

V. Complaints

Complaints about this Notice of Privacy Practices or how SCC handles your health information should be directed to:

Privacy Officer, Michael Morgan
505-989-8200, extension 1014
649 Harkle Road, Suite E

Santa Fe, NM 87505

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this office handles a complaint, you may submit a formal complaint to:

Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Civil Rights
Hubert H. Humphrey Bldg.
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 509F HHH Building
Washington, DC 20201

You may also address your complaint to one of the regional Offices for Civil Rights. A list of these offices can be found online at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/regmail.html>.