



Understanding the *Notice of Privacy Practices*

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare is dedicated to protecting your privacy. We believe you have a right to understand how your health information will be used. The following explanation will help you understand our *Notice of Privacy Practices*, a document that explains how we use and share your health information.

1. What is the *Notice of Privacy Practices*?

The federal government passed a law called the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) to strengthen and set national standards for the privacy of patients' health information. This law requires health care providers to give patients a *Notice of Privacy Practices* that tells patients how their health information is used and shared. The law also requires that health care providers tell patients about their rights regarding their health information. Our *Notice of Privacy Practices* explains this information.

2. Why do I have to sign the acknowledgement statement as part of the *Consent to Treat*?

As part of our routine admitting process, you will be asked to sign a consent form for treatment and a financial agreement. This is not a new procedure. In addition to agreeing to treatment and accepting financial responsibility for your treatment, the consent form asks you to acknowledge that we have given you a copy of our *Notice of Privacy Practices*. This law requires us to ask for acknowledgement from you in writing. Your signature does not mean that you agree with the way Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare protects your health information, only that you received a copy of the *Notice*.

3. How private is my health information?

Patient privacy has always been a top priority in health care. We have had many policies and procedures in place to ensure your information is kept confidential. The policies also help us comply with federal and state laws that protect the privacy of your information. Our employees are educated on how to protect your privacy. We will not share your health information without your written permission, unless allowed or required by law to do so.

4. What information is included in my medical record?

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare creates a medical record for you when you receive treatment from one of our health care professionals. Your medical records may include your medical history, details about your lifestyle such as smoking or participating in high risk sports, and your family medical history. Your records also may contain test results, a listing of medications that have been prescribed to you, and other reports that show the results of surgeries or other medical treatments.

5. Who has access to my medical records?

The health care professionals providing your care will have access to your medical records to keep a record of the treatment you receive. Your insurance company also will have access to your records in order to process payment for your treatment. Parts of your medical record also may be shared with our staff if they need it to do their jobs, such as scheduling your appointments, providing your care, or billing your insurance company.

6. What are my rights to my health information?

The *Notice of Privacy Practices* explains your rights regarding your health information. If you would like more information regarding your rights, contact Health Information Management at the facility where you were treated.

7. Who can explain the information in this *Notice* to me?

Our staff at the facility where you are being treated can answer many of the questions you may have about the *Notice of Privacy Practices*. In addition, you may contact our privacy office at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare 400 W. River Woods Parkway, P.O. Box 12076, Milwaukee, WI 53212-0076, 414-465-3544 to address your concerns.