



## **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 is being provided to you pursuant to the federal law known as HIPAA and an amendment to that law known as HITECH. If you have any questions about this notice, please contact Cathy Kubiak ([cathykubiak@grcc.edu](mailto:cathykubiak@grcc.edu)), the Privacy Officer at Grand Rapids Community College, 143 Bostwick Avenue NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503, (616) 234-3971.

### **Who Will Follow This Notice**

This notice describes the medical information practices of all of the group health plans (collectively, the “Plan”) maintained by Grand Rapids Community College (the “Plan Sponsor”) and that of any third party that assists in the administration of Plan claims. The Plan has been amended to incorporate the requirements of this notice.

### **Our Pledge Regarding Your Protected Health Information**

We understand that medical information about you and your health is personal. We are required by law to protect medical information about you. This notice applies to the medical records and information we maintain concerning the Plan. Your health care provider may have different policies or notices regarding the use and disclosure of your medical information created in the health provider’s facility.

This notice, which is required by law, will tell you about the ways in which we may use and disclose medical information about you (known as “protected health information” under federal law). It also describes our obligations and your rights regarding the use and disclosure of protected health information.

### **How We May Use and Disclose Protected Health Information About You**

The following categories describe different ways that we use and disclose protected health information. For each category of uses or disclosures we will explain what we mean and present some examples. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed. However, all of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of the categories.

**For Treatment.** We may use or disclose your protected health information to facilitate medical treatment or services by providers. We may disclose medical information about you to providers, including doctors, nurses, or other hospital personnel who are involved in taking care of you.

**For Payment.** We may use and disclose your protected health information to determine eligibility for Plan benefits, to facilitate payment for the treatment and services you receive from health care providers, or to determine benefit payment under the Plan. For example, we may tell your health care provider about your medical history to determine whether a particular treatment is experimental, investigational, or medically necessary or to determine whether the Plan will cover the treatment. We may also share your protected health information with a utilization review or precertification service provider. Likewise, we may share your protected health information with another entity to assist with the adjudication or subrogation of health claims or to another health plan to coordinate benefit payments.

**For Health Care Operations.** We may use and disclose your protected health information for Plan operations purposes. These uses and disclosures are necessary to run the Plan. For example, we may use your protected health information in connection with: conducting quality assessment and improvement activities; underwriting, premium rating, and other activities relating to Plan coverage; submitting claims for stop-loss (or excess loss) coverage; conducting or arranging for medical review, legal services, audit services, and fraud and abuse detection programs; business planning and development such as cost management; and business management and general Plan administrative activities.

**To Business Associates and Subcontractors.** We may contract with individuals and entities known as Business Associates to perform various functions or provide certain services. In order to perform these functions or provide these services, Business Associates may receive, create, maintain, use and/or disclose your protected health information, but only after they sign an agreement with us requiring them to implement appropriate safeguards regarding your protected health information. For example, we may disclose your protected health information to a Business Associate to administer claims or to provide support services, but only after the Business Associate enters into a Business Associate Agreement with us. Similarly, a Business Associate may hire a Subcontractor to assist in performing functions or providing services in connection with the Plan. If a Subcontractor is hired, the Business Associate may not disclose your protected health information to the Subcontractor until after the Subcontractor enters into a Subcontractor Agreement with the Business Associate.

**As Required by Law.** We will disclose your protected health information when required to do so by federal, state or local law.

**To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety.** We may use and disclose your protected health information when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of the public or another person. Any disclosure, however, would only be to someone able to help prevent the threat. For example, we may disclose your protected health information in a proceeding regarding the licensure of a physician.

**Disclosure to Health Plan Sponsor.** Information may be disclosed to another health plan maintained by Plan Sponsor for purposes of facilitating claims payments under that

plan. In addition, your protected health information may be disclosed to Plan Sponsor and its personnel for purposes of administering benefits under the Plan or as otherwise permitted by law and Plan Sponsor's HIPAA privacy policies and procedures.

### **Special Situations**

**Organ and Tissue Donation.** If you are an organ donor, we may release your protected health information to organizations that handle organ procurement or organ, eye or tissue transplantation or to an organ donation bank, as necessary to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation.

**Military and Veterans.** If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release your protected health information as required by military command authorities. We may also release protected health information about foreign military personnel to the appropriate foreign military authority.

**Workers' Compensation.** We may release your protected health information for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses.

**Public Health Risks.** We may disclose your protected health information for public health activities, such as to prevent or control disease, injury or disability, report births and deaths, or notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition.

**Health Oversight Activities.** We may disclose your protected health information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights laws.

**Law Enforcement.** We may release protected health information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official in certain situations, such as:

- in response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, or summons;
- to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person;
- about the victim of a crime if, under certain limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement; or
- about criminal conduct.

**Coroners and Medical Examiners.** We may release protected health information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death.

## **Your Rights Regarding Your Protected Health Information**

You have the following rights regarding your protected health information which we maintain:

**Right to Access.** You have the right to request access to the portion of your protected health information containing your enrollment, payment and other records used to make decisions about your Plan benefits. This includes the right to inspect the information as well as the right to a copy of the information. You may request that the information be sent to a third party. You must submit a request for access in writing to the Privacy Officer. If you request a copy of the information, we may charge a reasonable fee for the costs of copying, mailing or other supplies associated with your request (such as a thumb drive in the case of a request for electronic information – see next paragraph). We may deny your request to inspect and copy in certain circumstances. If you are denied access to medical information, you may request that the denial be reviewed.

If the Plan maintains your protected health information electronically in a designated record set, the Plan will provide you with access to the information in the electronic form and format you request if readily producible or, if not, in a readable electronic form and format as agreed to by the Plan and you.

**Right to Amend.** If you feel that protected health information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for the Plan.

To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to the Privacy Officer. In addition, you must provide a reason that supports your request.

We may deny your request for an amendment if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support the request. In addition, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that:

- is not part of the medical information kept by or for the Plan;
- was not created by us, unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment;
- is not part of the information which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or
- is accurate and complete.

**Right to an Accounting of Disclosures.** You have the right to request an accounting of certain disclosures of your protected health information. The accounting will not include disclosures to carry out treatment, payment and health care operations, disclosures to you about your own protected health information, disclosures pursuant to an individual authorization or other disclosures as set forth in Plan Sponsor's HIPAA privacy policies and procedures. To request this list or accounting of disclosures, you must submit your

request in writing to the Privacy Officer. Your request must state a time period which may not be longer than six years. Your request should indicate in what form you want the list (for example, paper or electronic). The first list you request within a 12 month period will be free. For additional lists, we may charge you for the reasonable costs of providing the list. We will notify you of the cost involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at that time before any costs are incurred.

Effective at the time prescribed by federal regulations, you may also request an accounting of uses and disclosures of your protected health information maintained as an electronic health record in the event the Plan maintains such records.

**Right to Request Restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction or limitation regarding your protected health information we use or disclose for treatment, payment or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on your protected health information we disclose to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member or friend. For example, you could ask that we not use or disclose information about a surgery you had.

We are not required to agree to your request.

To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to the Privacy Officer. In your request, you must tell us: (1) What information you want to limit; (2) Whether you want to limit our use, disclosure or both; and (3) To whom you want the limits to apply, for example, disclosures to your spouse.

**Right to Request Confidential Communications.** You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you at work or by mail.

To request confidential communications, you must make your request in writing to the Privacy Officer. We will not ask you the reason for your request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted.

**Right to a Paper Copy of this Notice.** If you received this notice electronically, you have the right to a paper copy of this notice. You may ask us to give you a paper copy of this notice at any time. To obtain a paper copy of this notice, contact the Privacy Officer.

### **Genetic Information**

If we use or disclose protected health information for underwriting purposes with respect to the Plan, we will not (except in the case of any long term care benefits) use or disclose protected health information that is your genetic information for such purposes.

### **Breach Notification Requirements**

In the event unsecured protected health information about you is “breached,” unless we determine that there is a low probability that the protected health information has been

compromised, we will notify you of the situation. We will also inform HHS and take any other steps required by law.

### **Changes to this Notice**

We reserve the right to change this notice. We reserve the right to make the revised or changed notice effective for protected health information we already have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. We will notify you in the event of a change.

### **Complaints**

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with the Plan by contacting the Privacy Officer. You may also file a complaint with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. All complaints must be submitted in writing. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.

### **Other Uses of Your Protected Health Information**

Other uses and disclosures of your protected health information not covered by this notice or applicable laws will be made only with your written permission. If you provide us permission to use or disclose your protected health information, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, we will no longer use or disclose your protected health information for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission.

### **Effective Date**

This notice is effective September 23, 2013.