

**NOTICE**  
**of HRA Psychological Services Policies and**  
**Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Personal**  
**Health Information**

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

**I. Uses and Disclosures for Treatment, Payment, and Health Care Operations**

We may use or disclose your protected health information (PHI), for treatment, payment, and health care operations purposes with your consent. To help clarify these terms, here are some definitions:

- “PHI” refers to information in your health record that could identify you.
- “Treatment, Payment, and Health Care Operations”
  - Treatment is when we provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and other services related to your health care. An example of treatment would be when your therapist consults with another health care provider, such as your family physician or another psychologist.
  - Payment is when we obtain reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are when we disclose your PHI to your health insurer to obtain reimbursement for your health care or to determine eligibility or coverage.
  - Health Care Operations are activities that relate to the performance and operation of this practice. Examples of health care operations are quality assessment and improvement activities, business-related matters such as audits and administrative services, and case management and care coordination.
- “Use” applies only to activities within our office, such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “Disclosure” applies to activities outside of our office, such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.
- “Mental Health Provider”, “MHP”, or “therapist” are all terms that refer to the professional who is providing your services at Human Resource Associates, and may include psychologists, social workers, or psychiatrists.

**II. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization**

We may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, or health care operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. An “authorization” is written permission above and beyond the general consent that permits only specific disclosures. In those instances when we are asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment or health care operations, we will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. We will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your Psychotherapy Notes. “Psychotherapy Notes” are notes your therapist may have made about your conversations during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which have been kept separate from the rest of your medical record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI.

You may revoke all such authorizations (of PHI or Psychotherapy Notes) at any time, provided each revocation is in writing. You may not revoke an authorization to the extent that (1) we have relied on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage, law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

**III. Uses and Disclosures with Neither Consent nor Authorization**

We may use or disclose PHI without your consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

- *Child Abuse* – If your MHP has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, he/she must report this suspicion to the appropriate authorities as required by law.
- *Adult and Domestic Abuse* – If your MHP has reasonable cause to suspect you have been criminally abused, he/she must report this suspicion to the appropriate authorities as required by law.
- *Health Oversight Activities* – If we receive a subpoena or other lawful request from the Department of Health or the Michigan Board of Psychology, we must disclose the relevant PHI pursuant to that subpoena or lawful request.
- *Judicial and Administrative Proceedings* – If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your diagnosis and treatment or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and we will not release information without your written authorization or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated or a third

party or where the evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.

- *Serious Threat to Health or Safety* – If you communicate to your therapist a threat of physical violence against a reasonably identifiable third person and you have the apparent intent and ability to carry out that threat in the foreseeable future, your therapist may disclose relevant PHI and take the reasonable steps permitted by law to prevent the threatened harm from occurring. If your MHP believes that there is an imminent risk that you will inflict serious physical harm on yourself, he/she may disclose information in order to protect you.
- *Worker's Compensation* – We may disclose protected health information regarding you as authorized by and to the extent necessary to comply with laws relating to worker's compensation or other similar programs, established by law, that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness without regard to fault.

#### **IV. Patient's Rights and Mental Health Provider's Duties**

##### **Patient's Rights:**

- *Right to Request Restrictions* – You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information. However, your therapist is not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- *Right to Receive Confidential Communications by Alternative Means and at Alternative Locations* – You have the right to request and receive confidential communications of PHI by alternative means and at alternative locations. (For example, you may not want a family member to know that you are seeing a MHP. On your request, we will send your bills to another address.)
- *Right to Inspect and Copy* – You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of PHI in HRA's mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. We may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process.
- *Right to Amend* – You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. Your MHP may deny

your request. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the amendment process.

- *Right to an Accounting* – You generally have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of PHI. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.
- *Right to a Paper Copy* – You have the right to obtain a paper copy of the notice from us upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.

##### **Mental Health Provider's Duties:**

- We are required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- We reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless we notify you of such changes, however, we are required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- If we revise our policies and procedures, we will notify you in person at the office, over the phone, or in the U.S. Mail, whenever we believe the change in policy or procedure directly affects or creates a disclosure of your PHI.

#### **V. Complaints**

If you are concerned that anyone at HRA has violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we have made about access to your records, you may contact the Privacy Officer, Clinical Director or Managing Associate of Human Resource Associates. Please ask your MHP or any one at HRA for direction on how to contact one of these people.

You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The people listed above can provide you with the appropriate address upon request.

#### **VI. Effective Date, Restrictions, and Changes to Privacy Policy**

This notice will go into effect on April 14, 2003. We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that we maintain. We will provide you with a revised notice by a personal contact in the office or the U.S. Mail, if this change affects a request you make regarding a disclosure of your PHI, or if the change would automatically result in a disclosure of your PHI.