

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 this notice carefully.

Our goal is to take appropriate steps to attempt to safeguard any medical or other personal information that is provided to us. The Privacy Rule under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (“HIPAA”) requires us to:

- Maintain the privacy of medical information provided to us
- Provide notice of our legal duties and privacy practices
- Abide by the terms of our Notice of Privacy Practices current in effect.

Who will follow this notice?

This notice describes the practices of our employees and staff at the Karns Vision Center. It also applies to specialists that we may refer you to for additional treatment, our billing companies, your insurance company, and our medical records provider. These entities may share medical information with each other for treatment, payment, and health care operation purposes described in this notice.

Information collected About You

In the ordinary course of receiving treatment and health care services from us, you will be providing us with personal information such as:

- Your name, address, and telephone number
- Information relating to your medical history
- Your insurance information and coverage
- Information concerning other medical providers of yours
- Your next of kin and/or power of attorney

We will gather certain medical information about you and will create a record of the care provided to you. Some information also may be provided to us by other individuals or organizations that are part of your “circle of care” such as the referring physician, your other doctors, your health plan, and close friends and family members.

How we may use and disclose Information About you

We may use and disclose personal and identifiable health information about you for a variety of purposes. All of the types of uses and disclosures of information are described below but not every use or disclosure in a category is listed.

Required Disclosures

We are required to disclose health information about you to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, upon request, to determine our compliance with HIPAA and to you, in accordance with your right to access and right to receive an accounting of disclosures, as described below.

For treatment

We may use health information about you in your treatment. For example, we may use your medical history, such as any presence or absence of disease, to assess the health of your eyes.

For payment

We may use and disclose health information about you to bill for our services and to collect payment from you or your insurance company. For example, we may need to give payer information about your current medical condition so that it will pay us for your eye examination or other services furnished to you. We may also need to inform your payer of future treatment in order to obtain prior approval or to determine if the service is covered.

For Health Care Operations

We may use and disclose information about you for the general operation of our business. For example, we sometimes arrange for consultants to review our procedures and make recommendations to improve our services.

Public Policy Uses and Disclosures

There are a number of public policy reasons why we may disclose information about you as noted below: We may disclose health information about you when we are required to do so by federal, state or local law. We may also disclose protected health information about you in connection with certain health reporting activities. For instance, we may disclose such information to a public health authority authorized to collect or receive PHI for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability, or at the direction of a public health authority, to an official of a foreign government agency that is acting in collaboration with a public health authority. Public health authorities include but are not limited to state health departments, the Center of Disease Control, the Food and Drug Administration, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency.

We are also permitted to disclose protected health information to a public health authority or other government authority authorized by law to receive reports of child abuse or neglect. Additionally we may disclose protected health information to a person subject to the FDA's power for the following activities: to report adverse events, product defects or problems, or biological product deviations; to tract products; to enable product recalls, repairs or replacements; to conduct post-marketing research. We may also disclose a patient's health information to a person who may have been exposed to a communicable disease or to an employer to conduct an evaluation relating to medical surveillance of the workplace or to evaluate whether an individual has a work-related illness or injury.

We may disclose a patient's health information where we reasonably believe a patient is a victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence and the patient authorizes the disclosure or it is required or authorized by law. We may disclose health information about you in connection with certain health oversight activities of licensing and other health oversight agencies which are authorized by law. Health oversight activities include audit, investigation, inspection, licensure, or disciplinary actions, and civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings or actions or any other activity necessary for the oversight of 1) the health care system, 2) governmental benefit programs for which health information is relevant to determining beneficiary eligibility, 3) entities subject to governmental regulatory programs for which health information is necessary for determining compliance with program standards, or 4) entities subject to civil rights laws for which health information is necessary for determining compliance.

We may disclose your health information as required by law, including in response to a warrant, subpoena, or other order of a court or administrative hearing body or to assist law enforcement in identifying or locating a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person.

Disclosures for law enforcement purposes also permit us to make disclosures about victims or crimes and the deaths of an individual among others.

We may release a patient's health information to a coroner or medical examiner to identify a deceased person or to determine the cause of death and to funeral directors. We may also release your health information to organ procurement organizations, transplant centers, and eye or tissue banks if you are an organ donor.

We may release your health information to workers' compensation or similar programs, which provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses without regard to fault.

Health information about you may also be disclosed when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of others.

We may use or disclose certain health information about your condition and treatment to prepare or analyze a research protocol which may be published.

If you are a member of the Armed Forces, we may release health information about you for activities deemed necessary by military command authorities. We also may release health information about foreign military personnel to their appropriate foreign military authority.

We may disclose your PHI for legal or administrative proceedings that involve you. We may release such information upon order of a court or administrative tribunal. We may also release PHI in the absence of such an order and in response to a discovery or other lawful request, if efforts have been made to notify you or secure a protective order.

If you are an inmate, we may release PHI about you to a correctional institution where you are incarcerated or to law enforcement officials in certain situations such as when the information is necessary for your treatment, health or safety, or the health and safety of others.

Finally, we may disclose PHI for national security and intelligence activities and for the provision of protective services to the President of the United States and other officials or foreign heads of state.

Our Business Associates

We sometimes work with outside individuals and businesses that help us operate our business successfully. We may disclose your health information to these business associates so that they can perform the tasks that we hire them to do. Our business associates must promise that they will respect the confidentiality of your personal and identifiable health information.

Disclosures to Persons Assisting in your Care or Payment for your Care

We may disclose information to individuals involved in your care or in the payment for your care. This includes people and organizations that are part of your "circle of care" such as your spouse, your other doctors, or an aide who may be providing services to you. We may also use and disclose health information about a patient for disaster relief efforts and to notify persons responsible for a patient's care about a patient's location, general condition or death. Generally, we will obtain your verbal agreement before using or disclosing health information in this way. However, under certain circumstances, such as in an emergency situation, we may make these uses and disclosures without your agreement.

Appointment reminders

We may use and disclose medical information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment or that you should schedule an appointment.

Treatment alternatives

We may use and disclose your PHI in order to tell you about or recommend possible treatment options, alternatives, or health-related services that may be of interest to you. We are required to obtain written authorization from you for any other uses and disclosures of medical information other than those described above. If you provide us with such permission, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, we will no longer use or disclose personal information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization, except to the extent we have already relied on your original permission.

Individual Rights

You have the right to ask for restrictions on the ways we use and disclose your health information for treatment, payment and health care operations purposes. You may also request that we limit our disclosures to persons assisting in your care or in helping you obtain payment for your care. We will consider your request, but we are not required to accept it. You have the right to request that you receive communications containing your protected health information from us by

alternative means or at alternative locations. For example, you may ask that we only contact you at home or by mail, or by email.

Except under certain circumstances, you have the right to inspect and copy medical, billing, and other records used to make decisions about you. If you ask for copies of this information, we reserve the right to charge you a fee. If you believe that information in your records is incomplete or incorrect, you have the right to ask us to correct the existing information or add missing information. Under certain circumstances, we may deny your request, such as when the information is accurate and complete. When making a request for an amendment, you must state a reason for making the request.

You have the right to receive a list of certain instances when we have used or disclosed your medical information. We are not required to include in the list uses and disclosures for your treatment, payment for services furnished to you, our health care operations, disclosures to you, disclosures you give us, and other authorizations. If you ask for this information from us more than once ever twelve months, we reserve the right to charge you a fee.

You have the right to a copy of this notice in paper form. You may ask us for a copy at any time.

To exercise any of your rights, please contact us in writing. Send your request to:

Michelle Dukes, Privacy Officer
7660 Oak Ridge Hwy
Knoxville, TN 37931

Changes to this notice

We reserve the right to make changes to this document at any time. We reserve the right to make the revised notice effective for personal health information we have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. In the event there is a material change to this notice, we will post the revised notice. In addition, you may request a copy of the revised notice at any time.

Complaints/Comments

If you have any complaints concerning our privacy practices, you may contact the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services at 200 Independence Ave, SW Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201 (e-mail: ocrmail@hhs.gov). You may also contact us at (865) 247-7715. **YOU WILL NOT BE RETALIATED AGAINST OR PENALIZED BY US FOR FILING A COMPLAINT.** To obtain more information concerning this office, you may contact our Privacy Officer:

Michelle Dukes, Privacy Officer
7660 Oak Ridge Hwy
Knoxville, TN 37931
(865) 247-7715

This notice is effective as of June 1, 2008.