

NORTHWEST COLORADO  
**HEALTH**  
NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL, INCLUDING DENTAL AND MENTAL HEALTH, INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY. During the process of providing services to you, Northwest Colorado Health (“Agency”) will obtain, record, and use mental health and medical information about you that is Protected Health Information. Ordinarily that information is confidential and will not be used or disclosed, except as described below.

## **I. USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PROTECTED INFORMATION**

A. General Uses and Disclosures Not Requiring the Individual’s Consent. Agency will use and disclose Protected Health Information in following ways.

1. Treatment. Treatment refers to the provision, coordination, or management of health care, including mental health care, and related services by one or more health care providers. For example, Agency will use your information to plan your course of treatment. As to other examples, Agency may consult with professional colleagues or ask professional colleagues to cover calls or the practice for Agency and will provide the information necessary to complete those tasks.

2. Payment. Payment refers to the activities undertaken by Agency to obtain or provide reimbursement for the provision of health care. Agency will use your information to develop accounts receivable information, bill you, and with your consent, provide information to your insurance company or other third-party payer for services provided. The information provided to insurers and other third-party payers may include information that identifies you, as well as your diagnosis, type of service, date of service, provider name/identifier, and other information about your condition and treatment. If you are covered by Medicaid, information will be provided to the State of Colorado’s Medicaid program, including but not limited to your treatment, condition, diagnosis, and services received.

3. Health Care Operations. Health Care Operations refers to activities undertaken by Agency that are regular functions of management and administrative activities of the practice. For example, Agency may use or disclose your health information in the monitoring of service quality, staff evaluation, and obtaining legal services.

4. Contacting the Individual. Agency may contact you to remind you of appointments and to tell you about treatments or other services that might be of benefit to you.

5. Required by Law. Agency will disclose Protected Health Information when required by law or necessary for health care oversight. This includes, but is not limited to when (a) reporting child abuse or neglect; (b) a court-ordered release of information; (c) there is a legal duty to warn or take action regarding imminent danger to others; (d) the Individual is a danger to self or others or gravely disabled; (e) a coroner is investigating the Individual’s death; or (f) to health oversight agencies for oversight activities authorized by law and necessary for the oversight of the health care system, government health care benefit programs, or regulatory compliance.

6. Crimes on the Premises or Observed by the Provider. Crimes that are observed by Agency or Agency's staff, crimes that are directed toward Agency or Agency's staff, or crimes that occur on the premises will be reported to law enforcement.

7. Business Associates. Some of the functions of Agency may be provided by contracts with Business Associates. For example, some of the billing, legal, auditing, and practice management services may be provided by contracting with outside entities to perform those services. In those situations, Protected Health Information will be provided to those contractors as is needed to perform their contracted tasks. Business Associates are required to enter into an agreement maintaining the Protected Health Information privacy of the Protected Health Information released to them.

8. Research. Agency may use or disclose Protected Health Information for research purposes if the relevant limitations of the Federal HIPAA Privacy Rule are followed. 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(i).

9. Involuntary Treatment. Information regarding Individuals who are being treated involuntarily, pursuant to law, will be shared with other treatment providers, legal entities, third-party payers and others, as necessary to provide the care and management coordination needed.

10. Family Members. Except for certain minors, incompetent Individuals, or involuntarily treated Individuals, Protected Health Information cannot be provided to family members without the Individual's consent. In situations where family members are present during a discussion with the Individual, and it can be reasonably inferred from the circumstances that the Individual does not object, information may be disclosed in the course of that discussion. However, if the Individual objects, Protected Health Information will not be disclosed.

11. Emergencies. In life threatening emergencies, Agency will disclose information necessary to avoid serious harm or death.

B. Statements That Certain Uses and Disclosures Require Authorization. Agency must obtain your Authorization in order to use or disclose your Protected Health Information as follows: (1) for marketing purposes; (2) to sell your Protected Health Information to a third party; and (3) most uses and disclosures of your psychotherapy notes.

C. Individual Authorization or Release of Information. Agency may not use or disclose Protected Health Information in any other way than set forth in this Notice without a signed Authorization. When you sign an Authorization, it may later be revoked, provided that the revocation is in writing. The revocation will apply, except to the extent Agency has already taken action in reliance thereon.

D. The Agency uses Quality Health Network (QHN) for the secure electronic delivery of your health information to the medical providers who are treating you. All Participants of the QHN network are subject to and abide by the HIPAA Privacy Laws. By participating in the QHN network, The Agency is able to provide timely information to your healthcare providers.

In addition to the electronic delivery of your health information, the QHN network compiles your health information from the participating medical providers and healthcare facilities that are providing you care. These medical records can be queried by participating providers involved in your care and are essential in order to provide you with the best possible care. This medical record is known as your Patient Summary Record.

You have the right to prevent your medical provider(s) from querying your Patient Summary Record. This right is referred to as “Opt- Out”. If you choose to Opt-Out, you understand the following: (1) that your medical provider(s) will NOT be able to view your medical record within the Patient Summary Record, even in the case of an emergency. AND (2) that your medical provider(s) WILL be able to use the QHN network to electronically receive and send your health information.

E. The Agency participates in Prisma which allows the ability of different healthcare systems, devices, and organizations to share and seamlessly exchange information with each other. It is designed so that clinicians can provide higher-quality patient care, coordinate care between clinicians and standardize public health data collection/reporting. You can also choose to “Opt-Out” which will prohibit your medical provider(s) from accessing these records.

## **II. YOUR RIGHTS AS AN INDIVIDUAL**

A. Access to Protected Health Information. You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of the Protected Health Information the provider has regarding you, in the designated record set. If records are used or maintained as electronic health record, you have a right to receive a copy of the PHI maintained in the electronic health record in an electronic format. However, you do not have the right to inspect or obtain a copy of psychotherapy notes. There are other limitations to this right, which will be provided to you at the time of your request, if any such limitation applies. To make a request, ask Agency.

B. Amendment of Your Record. You have the right to request that Agency amend your Protected Health Information. Agency is not required to amend the record if it is determined that the record is accurate and complete. There are other exceptions, which will be provided to you at the time of your request, if relevant, along with the appeal process available to you. To make a request, ask Agency.

C. Accounting of Disclosures. You have the right to receive an Accounting of certain disclosures Agency has made regarding your Protected Health Information. However, that Accounting does not include disclosures that were made for the purpose of Treatment, Payment, or Health Care Operations. In addition, the Accounting does not include disclosures made to you, disclosures made pursuant to a signed Authorization, or disclosures made prior to April 14, 2003. There are other exceptions that will be provided to you, should you request an Accounting. To make a request, ask Agency.

D. Additional Restrictions. You have the right to request additional restrictions on the use or disclosure of your health information. Unless you pay for your services out of pocket, Agency does not have to agree to that request, and there are certain limits to any restriction, which will be provided to you at the time of your request. If you pay for a service out of pocket, you are permitted to demand that information regarding the service not be disclosed to your health plan or insurance. To make a request, ask Agency.

E. Alternative Means of Receiving Confidential Communications. You have the right to request that you receive communications of Protected Health Information from Agency by alternative means or at alternative locations. For example, if you do not want Agency to mail bills or other materials to your home, you can request that this information be sent to another address. There are limitations to the granting of such requests, which will be provided to you at the time of the request process. To make a request, ask Agency.

F. Fundraising Opt Out. Agency may use your PHI to communicate with you to raise funds for its operations, unless you notify the Privacy Officer in writing and request that we do not contact you for this purpose.

G. Marketing. Agency engages in marketing and will obtain your Authorization before we use your PHI to contact you with marketing communications.

H. Breach Notification. In the event of any breach of your unsecured PHI, Agency will notify you of such breach within sixty (60) days of the date Agency learns of the breach.

I. Copy of this Notice. You have a right to obtain another copy of this Notice upon request.

### **III. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

A. Privacy Laws. Agency is required by State and Federal law to maintain the privacy of Protected Health Information. In addition, Agency is required by law to provide Individuals with notice of Agency's legal duties and privacy practices with respect to Protected Health Information. That is the purpose of this Notice.

B. Terms of the Notice and Changes to the Notice. Agency is required to abide by the terms of this Notice, or any amended Notice that may follow. Agency reserves the right to change the terms of its Notice and to make the new Notice provisions effective for all Protected Health Information that it maintains. When the Notice is revised, we will mail a revised notice to the address that you have given us, the revised Notice will be posted on our website, and will be available upon request.

C. Complaints Regarding Privacy Rights. If you believe the provider has violated your privacy rights, you have the right to complain to Agency. You also have the right to complain to the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services by sending your complaint to

Regional Manager, Office for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
999 18th Street, Suite 417  
Denver, Colorado 80294  
Phone: (800) 368-1019  
TDD: (800) 537-7697  
Fax: (303) 844-2025

It is the policy of Agency that there will be no retaliation for your filing of such complaints.

D. Contact Information. If you have questions about this Notice or desire additional information about your privacy rights, please contact our Privacy Officer at:

Amanda Arnold, Senior Director of Quality and Human Resources  
Northwest Colorado Health  
(970) 871-7329

E. Effective Date. This Notice is effective February 27, 2023.