



NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

The following "Notice of Privacy Practices" contains important information about how your medical information is used and protected by Greater Columbia Behavioral Health. Greater Columbia Behavioral Health provides funding to the following agencies where you may have accessed services:

**Benton/Franklin Counties
Crisis Response Unit**
509-783-0500 - Kennewick

Blue Mountain Counseling
509-382-1164 - Dayton

Catholic Family & Child Service
509-965-7100 - Yakima

Catholic Family & Child Service
509-946-4645 - Richland

**Central Washington Comprehensive Mental
Health (CWCMH)**
509-925-9861 - Ellensburg
509-837-2089 - Sunnyside
509-575-4084 - Yakima
509-773-5801 - Goldendale
509-493-3400 - White Salmon

Garfield County Human Services
509-843-3791 - Pomeroy

Lourdes Counseling Center
509-943-9104 - Richland

Lutheran Community Services Northwest
509-735-6446 - Kennewick

**Nueva Esperanza Community Counseling
Center - La Clinica**
509-545-6506 - Pasco

Palouse River Counseling Center
509-334-1133 - Pullman

Quality Behavioral Health
509-758-3341 - Clarkston

Skamania County Counseling Center
509-427-3850 - Stevenson

Walla Walla County Department of Human Services
509-524-2920 - Walla Walla

**Yakima Valley Farmworkers (YVFW)
Behavioral Health Services**
509-453-1344 - Yakima

Greater Columbia Behavioral Health maintains only a limited amount of medical information at its Regional Office associated with your services and related billing information. Requests you might have for information associated with your services should be directed to the agency where you have accessed services.

This Privacy Notice is written and given to you to assist in understanding a new law called the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and includes the following information:

- **Section 1** of the Notice of Privacy Practices tells about the responsibilities that the Greater Columbia Behavioral Health Plan has about keeping your medical information private and giving you a copy of the notice.
- **Section 2** of the Notice of Privacy Practices explains your rights about your medical information.
- **Section 3** explains how the Greater Columbia Behavioral Health Plan may use or share your medical information.
- **Section 4** explains how you may ask for help to understand your rights or to complain about privacy practices.

***Please look at the Notice for more complete information.
Llame al 1-800-795-9296 o al 735-8681 para recibir este aviso en español.***



Effective Date: April 14, 2003

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.

Greater Columbia Behavioral Health (GCBH) respects your privacy. We understand that your medical information is very sensitive. We will not disclose your medical information to others unless you allow us to do so, or the law allows us to do so.

This notice will tell you about the ways in which we may use and disclose medical information about you. We also describe your rights and certain obligations we have regarding the use and disclosure of your medical information.

1. GCBH DUTIES

We are required by law to:

- Make sure that medical information that identifies you is kept private;
- Give you this Notice upon your request; and
- Follow the terms of the Notice of Privacy Practices that is currently in effect.

We reserve the right to change the terms of our Notice of Privacy Practices. We also reserve the right to make the revised or changed notice effective for medical information we already have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. The notice will contain on the first page, in the top right-hand corner, the effective date. A copy of the current notice will be posted in our office and on the GCBH website: www.gcbh.org. You may also receive the most recent copy of this notice by calling and asking for it or visiting our office to pick one up.

2. YOUR MEDICAL INFORMATION RIGHTS

You have the following rights regarding medical information we maintain about you:

- **Right to Inspect and Copy**. You may request access to your medical record and billing records maintained by us in order to inspect and request copies of the records. All requests for access must be made in writing. Under limited circumstances, we may deny access to your records. We may charge a fee for the costs of copying and sending you any records requested.
- **Right to Amend**. If you believe the medical information we maintain about you is incorrect or incomplete, you have the right to request that we amend your medical information. Your request must be in writing, and it must explain why the information should be amended. We may deny your request under certain circumstances.
- **Right to an Accounting of Disclosures**. Upon written request to the Privacy Officer at our office, you may obtain an accounting of certain disclosures of medical information made by us after April 14, 2003. This right applies to disclosures for purposes other than treatment, payment or health care

operations, excludes disclosures made to you or disclosures otherwise authorized by you, and is subject to other restrictions and limitations.

- **Right to Request Restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the medical information we have on record at GCBH. To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to the Privacy Officer at our office. 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. We are not required to agree to your request. If we do agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you emergency treatment.
- **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 at our office. 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.** You have the right to a paper copy of this Notice of Privacy Practices (“Notice”). You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. Even if you have agreed to receive this notice electronically, you are still entitled to a paper copy of this notice.

You may obtain a copy of this notice at our website, www.gcbh.org.

To obtain a paper copy of this notice, contact the Ombuds Service or Privacy Officer at our office.

3. HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

We may use and disclose medical information about you without your written authorization for certain purposes, except as otherwise described in this Notice. The examples provided in each category are not meant to be exhaustive, but instead are meant to describe the types of uses and disclosures that are permissible under federal and state law.

- **For Treatment.** Though we do not provide treatment directly, we may disclose medical information about you that your health care provider requests to help them with your medical treatment or services. For example, we may disclose treatment summaries that are sent to our office to a health care provider who is involved with your care.
- **For Health Care Operations.** We may use and disclose medical information for operational purposes. For example, members of our staff routinely review records to assess quality and to improve the services provided to you.
- **For Payment.** We may use and disclose your medical information so that we can process payments for services provided to you. For example, when we request payment from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Mental Health Division, DSHS needs information such as your diagnoses, services performed or recommended care in order to authorize these payments.
- **Notifications.** We may disclose medical information about you to assist in disaster relief efforts.
- **Service Information.** We may use your medical information to inform you of treatment alternatives and/or health-related products or services that may be of interest to you and are provided by us, included in your plan of benefits or otherwise available to you.

- **As Required By Law.** We will disclose medical information about you 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 medical information about you 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 or lessen the threat.
- **Public Health.** We may disclose medical information about you for public health and safety activities as allowed or required by law.
- **About Victims of Abuse, Neglect or Domestic Violence.** We may disclose medical information when we believe that you may be a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence. We will only make this disclosure if you agree or when required or authorized by law.
- **Law Enforcement.** We will disclose medical information about you to law enforcement when allowed or required to do so by federal, state or local law.
- **Court Proceedings.** We may disclose medical information about you for court proceedings as allowed or required to do so by federal, state or local law.
- **Health Oversight Activities.** We may disclose medical information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure of GCBH. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights laws.
- **Research.** We may disclose your medical information to researchers when their research has been approved by an Institutional Review Board or a similar privacy board that has reviewed the research protocol and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your medical information.
- **Special Government Functions.** We may release medical information about you to authorized federal officials so they may provide protection to the President, other authorized persons or foreign heads of state, for intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law.
- **Inmates.** If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement official, we may release medical information about you to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be necessary (1) for the institution to provide you with medical care; (2) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of others; or (3) for the safety and security of the correctional institution.

Other uses and disclosures of medical information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written permission. If you provide us permission to use or disclose medical information about you, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, we will no longer use or disclose medical information about you 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, and that we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you.

4. TO ASK FOR HELP OR COMPLAIN

If you have questions, want more information, or want to report a problem about the handling of your medical information, you may contact the Ombuds Service at 1-800-257-0660 or 509-783-3325, or the Privacy Officer at 1-800-795-9296 or 509-735-8681.

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with the Ombuds Service or Privacy Officer at 101 N. Edison, Kennewick, WA 99336. You may also file a complaint with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. All complaints must be submitted in writing.

We respect your right to file a complaint with us or with the Secretary of Health and Human Services. If you choose to take this action, we will not retaliate against you!