

HIPAA NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

**Andrew G. Couch, DMD, PLLC
1081 Dove Run Rd, Suite 101
Lexington, KY 40502**

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION under the HIPAA Omnibus Rule of 2013.

For purposes of this Notice "us" "we" and "our" refers to **Andrew G. Couch, DMD, PLLC**, and "you" or "your" refers to our patients (or their legal representatives as determined by us in accordance with state informed consent law). When you receive dental services from us, we will obtain access to your medical information (i.e. your health history). We are committed to maintaining the privacy of your health information and we have implemented numerous procedures to ensure that we do so.

The Federal Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act of 2013, HIPAA Omnibus Rule, (formally HIPAA 1996 & HITECH of 2004) require us to maintain the confidentiality of all your healthcare records and other identifiable patient health information (PHI) used by or disclosed to us in any form, whether electronic, on paper, or spoken. HIPAA is a Federal Law that gives you significant new rights to understand and control how your health information is used. Federal HIPAA Omnibus Rule and state law provide penalties for covered entities, business associates, and their subcontractors and records owners, respectively that misuse or improperly disclose PHI.

Starting April 14, 2003, HIPAA requires us to provide you with the Notice of our legal duties and the privacy practices we are required to follow when you first come into our office for health-care services. If you have any questions about this Notice, please ask to speak to our HIPAA Privacy Officer.

OUR RULES ON HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

Under the law, we must have your signature on a written, dated Consent Form and/or an Authorization Form of Acknowledgement of this Notice, before we will use or disclose your PHI for certain purposes as detailed in the rules below.

Documentation – You will be asked to sign an Authorization / Acknowledgement form when you receive this Notice of Privacy Practices. If you did not sign such a form or need a copy of the one you signed, please contact Dr. Couch. You may take back or revoke your consent or authorization at any time (unless we already have acted based on it) by submitting our Revocation Form in writing to us at our address listed above. Your revocation will take effect when we actually receive it. We cannot give it retroactive effect, so it will not affect any use or disclosure that occurred in our reliance on your Consent or Authorization prior to revocation (i.e. if after we provide services to you, you revoke your authorization / acknowledgement in order to prevent us billing or collecting for those services, your revocation will have no effect because we relied on your authorization/ acknowledgement to provide services before you revoked it).

General Rule – If you do not sign our authorization/ acknowledgement form or if you revoke it, as a general rule (subject to exceptions described below under "Healthcare Treatment, Payment and Operations Rule" and "Special Rules"), we cannot in any manner use or disclose to anyone (excluding you, but including payers and Business Associates) your PHI or any other information in your medical record. By law, we are unable to submit claims to payers under assignment of benefits without your signature on our authorization/ acknowledgement form. You will however be able to restrict disclosures to your insurance carrier for services for which you wish to pay "out of pocket" under the new Omnibus Rule. We will not condition treatment on you signing an authorization / acknowledgement, but we may be forced to decline you as a new patient or discontinue you as an active patient if you choose not to sign the authorization/ acknowledgement or revoke it.

Healthcare Treatment, Payment and Operations Rule

With your signed consent, we may use or disclose your PHI in order:

- To provide you with or coordinate healthcare treatment and services.
- To bill or collect payment from you, an insurance company, a managed-care organization, a health benefits plan or another third party.
- To run our office, assess the quality of care our patients receive and provide you with customer service.
- New HIPAA Omnibus Rule does not require that we provide the above notice regarding Appointment Reminders, Treatment Information or Health Benefits, but we are including these as a courtesy so you understand our business practices with regards to your (PHI) protected health information.

Special Rules

Notwithstanding anything else contained in this Notice, only in accordance with applicable HIPAA Omnibus Rule, and under strictly limited circumstances, we may use or disclose your PHI without your permission, consent or authorization for the following purposes:

- When required under federal, state or local law
- When necessary in emergencies to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of other persons
- When necessary for public health reasons
- For federal or state government health-care oversight activities
- For judicial and administrative proceedings and law enforcement purposes
- For Worker's Compensation purposes
- For intelligence, counterintelligence or other national security purposes
- For organ and tissue donation
- For research projects approved by an Institutional Review Board or a privacy board to ensure confidentiality
- To create a collection of information that is "de-identified"
- To family members, friends and others, but only if you are present and verbally give permission. We give you an opportunity to object and if you do not, we reasonably assume, based on our professional judgment and the surrounding circumstances, that you do not object (i.e. you bring someone with you into the operator or exam room during treatment or into the conference area when we are discussing your PHI); we reasonably infer that it is in your best interest (i.e. to allow someone to pick up your records because they knew you were our patient and you asked them in writing with your signature to do so); or it is an emergency situation involving you or another person (i.e. your minor child or ward) and, respectively, you cannot consent to your care because you are incapable of doing so or you cannot consent to the other person's care because, after a reasonable attempt, we have been unable to locate you. In these emergency situations we may, based on our professional judgment and the surrounding circumstances, determine that disclosure is in the best interests of you or the other person, in which case we will disclose PHI, but only as it pertains to the care being provided and we will notify you of the disclosure as soon as possible after the care is completed. **As per HIPAA law 164.512(j) (i)... (A) Is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious or imminent threat to the health and safety of a person or the public and (B) Is to person or persons reasonably able to prevent or lessen that threat.**

Minimum Necessary Rule

Our staff will not use or access your PHI unless it is necessary to do their jobs. All of our team members are trained in HIPAA Privacy rules and sign strict Confidentiality Contracts with regards to protecting and keeping private your PHI. So do our Business Associates and their subcontractors. Know that your PHI is protected several layers deep with regards to our business relations. Also, we disclose to others outside our staff, only as much of your PHI as is necessary to accomplish the recipient's lawful purposes. Still in certain cases, we may use and disclose the entire contents of your medical record:

- To you (and your legal representatives as stated above) and anyone else you list on a Consent or Authorization to receive a copy of your records
- To healthcare providers for treatment purposes
- To the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- To others as required under federal or state law
- To our privacy officer and others as necessary to resolve your complaint or accomplish your request under HIPAA

In accordance with HIPAA law, we presume that requests for disclosure of PHI from another Covered Entity (as defined in HIPAA) are for the minimum necessary amount of PHI to accomplish the requestor's purpose. Our Privacy Officer will individually review unusual or non-recurring requests for PHI to determine the minimum necessary amount of PHI and disclose only that. For non-routine requests or disclosures, our Privacy Officer will make a minimum necessary determination based on, but not limited to, the following factors:

- The amount of information being disclosed
- The number of individuals or entities to whom the information is being disclosed
- The importance of the use or disclosure
- The likelihood of further disclosure
- Whether the same result could be achieved with de-identified information
- The technology available to protect confidentiality of the information
- The cost to implement administrative, technical and security procedures to protect confidentiality

If we believe that a request from others for disclosure of your entire medical record is unnecessary, we will ask the requestor to document why this is needed, retain that documentation and make it available to you upon request.

Incidental Disclosure Rule

We will take reasonable administrative, technical and security safeguards to ensure the privacy of your PHI when we use or disclose it, we use firewall and router protection to the federal standard, we back up our PHI data off-site and encrypted to federal standard, we do not allow unauthorized access to areas where PHI is stored/filed (or we have unsupervised business associates sign Business Associate Confidentiality Agreements).

However, in the event that there is a breach in protecting your PHI, we will follow Federal Guide Lines to HIPAA Omnibus Rule Standard to first evaluate the breach situation, we will document the situation, retain copies of the situation on file, and report all breaches (other than low probability as prescribed by the Omnibus Rule) to the US Department of Health and Human Services at:

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/administrative/breachnotificationrule/brinstruction.html>

We will also make proper notification to you and any other parties of significance as required by HIPAA Law.

Business Associate Rule

Business Associates are defined as: an entity, (non-employee) that in the course of their work will directly / indirectly use, transmit, view, transport, hear, interpret, process or offer PHI for this Facility.

Business Associates and other third parties (if any) that receive your PHI from us will be prohibited from re-disclosing it unless required to do so by law or you give prior express written consent to the re-disclosure. Nothing in our Business Associate agreement will allow our Business Associate to violate this re-disclosure prohibition. Under Omnibus Rule, Business Associates will sign a strict confidentiality agreement binding them to keep your PHI protected and report any compromise of such information to us, you and the United States Department of Health and Human Services, as well as other required entities. Our Business Associates will also follow Omnibus Rule and have any of their Subcontractors that may directly or indirectly have contact with your PHI, sign Confidentiality Agreements to Federal Omnibus Standard.

Super-confidential Information Rule

If we have PHI about you regarding communicable diseases, disease testing, alcohol or substance abuse diagnosis and treatment, or psychotherapy and mental health records (super-confidential information under the law), we will not disclose it under the General or Healthcare Treatment, Payment and Operations Rules (see above) without your first signing and properly completing our Consent form (i.e. you specifically must initial the type of super-confidential information we are allowed to disclose). If you do not specifically authorize disclosure by initialing the super-confidential information, we will not disclose it unless authorized under the Special Rules (see above) (i.e. we are required by law to disclose it). If we disclose super-confidential information (either because you have initialed the consent form or the Special Rules authorizing us to do so), we will comply with state and federal law that requires us to warn the recipient in writing that re-disclosure is prohibited.

Changes to Privacy Policies Rule

We reserve the right to change our privacy practices (by changing the terms of this Notice) at any time as authorized by law. The changes will be effective immediately upon us making them. They will apply to all PHI we create or receive in the future, as well as to all PHI created or received by us in the past (i.e. to PHI about you that we had before the changes took effect). If we make changes, we will post the changed Notice, along with its effective date, in our office and on our website. Also, upon request, you will be given a copy of our current Notice.

Authorization Rule

We will not use or disclose your PHI for any purpose or to any person other than as stated in the rules above without your signature on our specifically worded, written Authorization / Acknowledgement Form (not a Consent or an Acknowledgement). If we need your Authorization, we must obtain it via a specific Authorization Form, which may be separate from any Authorization / Acknowledgement we may have obtained from you. We will not condition your treatment here on whether you sign the Authorization (or not).

Marketing and Fund Raising Rules

Limitations on the disclosure of PHI regarding Remuneration

We do not accept remuneration for any of your protected health information from any source.

Limitation on the Use of PHI for Paid Marketing

We will, in accordance with Federal and State Laws, obtain your written authorization to use or disclose your PHI for marketing purposes, (i.e.: to use your photo in ads) but not for activities that constitute treatment or healthcare operations.

We do not accept remuneration from third parties for health care services or products we recommend.

Face-to-face marketing communications, such as sharing with you, a written product brochure or pamphlet, is permissible under current HIPAA Law.

Flexibility on the Use of PHI for Fundraising

Under the HIPAA Omnibus Rule use of PHI is more flexible and does not require your authorization should we choose to include you in any fund raising efforts attempted at this facility? However, we will offer the opportunity for you to "opt out" of receiving future fundraising communications. Simply let us know that you want to "opt out" of such situations. There will be a statement on your **HIPAA Patient Acknowledgement Form** where you can choose to "opt out". Our commitment to care and treat you will in no way effect your decision to participate or not participate in our fund raising efforts.

Improvements to Requirements for Authorizations Related to Research

We are not currently involved in research.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

If you got this Notice via email or website, you have the right to get, at any time, a paper copy by asking our Privacy Officer. Also, you have the following additional rights regarding PHI we maintain about you:

To Inspect and Copy

You have the right to see and get a copy of your PHI including, but not limited to, medical and billing records by submitting a written request to our Privacy Officer. Original records will not leave the premises, will be available for inspection only during our regular business hours, and only if our Privacy Officer is present at all times. You may ask us to give you the copies in a format other than photocopies (and we will do so unless we determine that it is impractical) or ask us to prepare a summary in lieu of the copies. We will comply with Federal Law to provide your PHI in an electronic format within the 30 days, to Federal specification, when you provide us with proper written request. If we deny your request, you may ask for a review of that decision. If required by law, we will select a licensed health-care professional (other than the person who denied your request initially) to review the denial and we will follow his or her decision. If we select a licensed healthcare professional who is not affiliated with us, we will ensure a Business Associate Agreement is executed that prevents re-disclosure of your PHI without your consent by that outside professional.

To Request Amendment / Correction

If another doctor involved in your care tells us in writing to change your PHI, we will do so as expeditiously as possible upon receipt of the changes and will send you written confirmation that we have made the changes. If you think PHI we have about you is incorrect, or that something important is missing from your records, you may ask us to amend or correct it (so long as we have it) by submitting a "**Request for Amendment / Correction**" form to our Privacy Officer.

To an Accounting of Disclosures

You may ask us for a list of those who got your PHI from us by submitting a "**Request for Accounting of Disclosures**" form to us. The list will not cover some disclosures. Your request must state in what form you want the list, and the time period you want us to cover, which may be up to but not more than the last six years (excluding dates before April 14, 2003).

To Request Restrictions

You may ask us to limit how your PHI is used and disclosed (i.e. in addition to our rules as set forth in this Notice) by submitting a written "**Request for Restrictions on Use, Disclosure**" form to us. If we agree to these additional limitations, we will follow them except in an emergency where we will not have time to check for limitations. Also, in some circumstances we may be unable to grant your request.

To Request Alternative Communications

You may ask us to communicate with you in a different way or at a different place by submitting a written "**Request for Alternative Communication**" Form to us. We will not ask you why and we will accommodate all reasonable requests. You must tell us the alternative means or location you want us to use and explain to our satisfaction how payment to us will be made if we communicate with you as you request.

To Complain or Get More Information

We will follow our rules as set forth in this Notice. If you want more information or if you believe your privacy rights have been violated (i.e. you disagree with a decision of ours about inspection / copying, amendment / correction, accounting of disclosures, restrictions or alternative communications), we want to make it right. We never will penalize

you for filing a complaint. To do so, please file a formal, written complaint within 180 days with:

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Office of Civil Rights
200 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20201
877.696.6775

Or, submit a written Complaint form to us at the following address:

Our Privacy Officer: Andrew G. Couch, DMD
Office Name: Andrew G. Couch, DMD, PLLC
Office Address: 1081 Dove Run Rd, Suite 101
Lexington, KY 40502
Office Phone: (859) 266-8890
Office Fax: (859) 335-0522
Email Address: info@drewcouchdmd.com

You may get your "**HIPAA Complaint**" form by calling our privacy officer.

These privacy practices are in accordance with the original HIPAA enforcement effective April 14, 2003, and undated to Omnibus Rule effective March 26, 2013 and will remain in effect until we replace them as specified by Federal and/or State Law.