



# COUNTY OF VENANGO

## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

PRIVACY RULE SECTION: 1364.520, 164.530 (l) (4)

***THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL  
INFORMATION & PERSONAL IDENTIFIABLE  
INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED  
AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET  
ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION.***

***PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.***

This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how protected health information (PHI/PII) and personally identifiable information (PII) is protected or may be used or disclosed by the County of Venango to carry out payment, operations, and for other purposes that are permitted or required by law. This Notice also sets out our legal obligations concerning your PHI/PII, and describes your rights to access, amend and manage your PHI/PII.

PHI is individually identifiable health information, including demographic information, collected from you or created or received by a health care provider, a health plan, your employer (when functioning on behalf of the group health plan), or a health care clearinghouse and that relates to: (i) your past, present, or future physical or mental health or condition; (ii) the provision of health care to you; or (iii) the past, present, or future payment for the provision of health care to you. This Notice of Privacy Practices had been drafted to be consistent with what is known as the “HIPAA Privacy Rule,” and any of the terms not defined in this Notice should have the same meaning as they have in the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

Personally Identifiable Information “PII,” refers to information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual’s identity, either alone or when combined with other personal or identifying information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual. (e.g., Social Security Number (SSN), name, date of birth (DOB), home address, personal email).

If you have any questions or want additional information about this Notice or the policies and procedures described in this Notice, please contact:

**Kay A. Koyack, Compliance Officer**

**1 Dale Avenue, Franklin, PA 16323**

**(814)432-9126**

**[kkoyack@co.venango.pa.us](mailto:kkoyack@co.venango.pa.us)**

We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your PHI/PII. We are obligated to: provide you with a copy of this Notice of our legal duties and of our privacy practices related to your PHI/PII/PII; abide by the terms of the Notice that is currently in effect; and notify you in the event of a breach of your unsecured PHI/PII or PII. We reserve the right to change the provisions of our Notice and make the new provisions effective for all PHI/PII that we maintain. If we make a material change to our Notice, we will make the revised Notice available via the county website, [www.co.venango.pa.us](http://www.co.venango.pa.us) and in paper copy at the Venango Human Services Complex at 1 Dale Avenue, Franklin., Pa 16323 and Human Resources Department at 1174 Elk Street, Franklin, Pa 16323.

#### **Permissible Uses and Disclosures of PHI/PII**

The following is a description of how we are most likely to use and/or disclose your PH/PII.

**Payment and Health Care Operations:** We have the right to use and disclose your PHI/PII for all activities that are included within the definitions of “payment” and “health care operations” as set out in 45 C.F.R. § 164.501 (this provision is a part of the HIPAA Privacy Rule). We have not listed in this Notice all of the activities included within these definitions, so please refer to 45 C.F.R. § 164.501 for a complete list.

**Payment:** We will use or disclose your PHI/PII/ PII to pay claims for services provided to you and to obtain stop-loss reimbursements or to otherwise fulfill our responsibilities for coverage and providing benefits. For example, we may disclose your PHI/PII when a provider requests information regarding your eligibility for coverage under our health plan, or we may use your information to determine if a treatment that you received was medically necessary.

**Health Care Operations:** We will use or disclose your PHI/PII to support our business functions. These functions include, but are not limited to: quality assessment and improvement, reviewing provider performance, licensing, stop-loss underwriting, business planning, and business development. For example, we may use or disclose your PHI/PII: (i) to provide you with information about a disease management program; (ii) to respond to a customer service inquiry from you; or (iii) in connection with fraud and abuse detection and compliance programs.

#### **Other Permissible Uses and disclosures of PHI/PII**

**Required by Law:** We may use or disclose your PHI/PII to the extent the law requires the use or disclosure. When used in this Notice, “required by law” is defined as it is in the HIPAA Privacy Rule. For example, we may disclose your PHI/PII when required by national security laws or public health disclosure laws.

**Public Health Activities:** We may use or disclose your PHI/PII for public health activities that are permitted or required by law. For example, we may use or disclose information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability, or we may disclose such information to a public health authority authorized to receive reports of child abuse or neglect. We also may disclose PHI/PII, if directed by a public health authority, to a foreign government agency that is collaborating with the public health authority.

**Abuse or Neglect:** We may disclose your PHI/PII to a government authority that is authorized by law to receive reports of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. Additionally, as required by law, we may disclose to a governmental entity authorized to receive such information your PHI/PII if we believe that you have been a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.

**Health Oversight Activities:** We may disclose your PHI/PII to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as: audits; investigations; inspections; licensure or disciplinary actions; or civil, administrative, or criminal proceedings or actions. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies that oversee: (i) the health care system; (ii) government benefit programs; (iii) other government regulatory programs; and (iv) compliance with civil rights laws.

**Legal Proceedings:** We may disclose your PHI/PII: (i) in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding; (ii) in response to an order of a court or administrative tribunal (to the extent such disclosure is expressly authorized); and (iii) in response to a subpoena, a discovery request, or other lawful process, once we have met all administrative requirements of the HIPAA Privacy Rule. For example, we may disclose your PHI/PII in response to a subpoena for such information, but only after we first meet certain conditions required by the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

**Law Enforcement:** Under certain conditions, we also may disclose your PHI/PII to law enforcement officials. For example, some of the reasons for such a disclosure may include, but not be limited to: (i) it is required by law or some other legal process; (ii) it is necessary to locate or identify a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person; and (iii) it is necessary to provide evidence of a crime that occurred on our premises.

**Research:** We may disclose your PHI/PII to researchers when an institutional review board or privacy board has: (i) reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of the information; and (ii) approved the research.

**Coroners, Medical Examiners, Funeral Directors; Organ Donation Organizations:** We may disclose PHI/PII to a coroner or medical examiner for purposes of identifying a deceased person, determining a cause of death, or for the coroner or medical examiner to perform other duties authorized by law. We also may disclose, as authorized by law, information to funeral directors so that they may carry out their duties. Further, we may disclose PHI/PII to organizations that handle organ, eye, or tissue donation and transplantation.

**To Prevent a Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** Consistent with applicable federal and state laws, we may disclose your PHI/PII if we believe that the disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public. We also may disclose PHI/PII if it is necessary for law enforcement authorities to identify or apprehend an individual.

**Military Activity and National Security, Protective Services:** Under certain conditions, we may disclose your PHI/PII if you are, or were, Armed Forces personnel for activities deemed necessary by appropriate military command authorities. If you are a member of foreign military service, we may disclose, in certain circumstances, your information to the foreign military authority. We also may disclose your PHI/PII to authorized federal officials for conducting national security and intelligence activities, and for the protection of the President, other authorized persons, or heads of state.

**Inmates:** If you are an inmate of a correctional institution, we may disclose your PHI/PII to the correctional institution or to a law enforcement official for: (i) the institution to provide health care to you; (ii) your health and safety and the health and safety of others; or (iii) the safety and security of the correctional institution.

**Workers' Compensation:** We may disclose your PHI/PII to comply with workers' compensation laws and other similar programs that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses.

**Emergency Situations:** We may disclose your PHI/PII in an emergency situation, or if you are incapacitated or not present, to a family member, close personal friend, authorized disaster relief agency, or any other person previously identified by you. We will use professional judgment and experience to determine if the disclosure is in your best interests. If the disclosure is in your best interest, we will disclose only the PHI/PII that is directly relevant to the person's involvement in your care.

**Fundraising Activities:** We may use or disclose your PHI/PII for fundraising activities, such as raising money for a charitable foundation or similar entity to help finance its activities. If we do contact you for fundraising activities, we will give you the opportunity to opt-out, or stop, receiving such communications in the future.

**Group Health Plan Disclosures:** We may disclose your PHI/PII to a sponsor of the group health plan – such as an employer or other entity – that is providing a health care program to you. We can disclose your PHI/PII to that entity if that entity has contracted with us to administer your health care program on its behalf.

**Underwriting Purposes:** We may use or disclose your PHI/PII for underwriting purposes, such as to make a determination about a coverage application or request. If we do use or disclose your PHI/PII for underwriting purposes, we are prohibited from using or disclosing in the underwriting process your PHI/PII that is genetic information.

**Others Involved in Your Health Care:** Using our best judgment, we may make your PHI/PII known to a family member, other relative, close personal friend or other personal representative that you identify. Such a use will be based on how involved the person is in your care, or payment that relates to your care. We may release information to parents or guardians, if allowed by law. If you are not present or able to agree to these disclosures of your PHI/PII, then, using our professional judgment, we may determine whether the disclosure is in your best interest.

### **Uses and Disclosures of Your PHI/PII that Require Your Authorization**

**Sale of PHI/PII:** We will request your written authorization before we make any disclosure that is deemed a sale of your PHI/PII, meaning that we are receiving compensation for disclosing the PHI/PII in this manner.

**Marketing:** We will request your written authorization to use or disclose your PHI/PII for marketing purposes with limited exceptions, such as when we have face-to-face marketing communications with you or when we provide promotional gifts of nominal value.

**Psychotherapy Notes:** We will request your written authorization to use or disclose any of your psychotherapy notes that we may have on file with limited exception, such as for certain treatment, payment or health care operation functions.

Other uses and disclosures of your PHI/PII that are not described above will be made only with your written authorization. If you provide us with such an authorization, you may revoke the authorization in writing, and this revocation will be effective for future uses and disclosures of PHI/PII. However, the revocation will not be effective for information that we already have used or disclosed, relying on the authorization.

### **Required Disclosures of Your PHI/PII**

The following is a description of disclosures that we are required by law to make.

**Disclosures to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:** We are required to disclose your PHI/PII to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services when the Secretary is investigating or determining our compliance with the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

**Disclosures to You:** We are required to disclose to you most of your PHI/PII in a “designated record set” when you request access to this information. Generally, a “designated record set” contains medical and billing records, as well as other records that are used to make decisions about your health care benefits. We also are required to provide, upon your request, an accounting of most disclosures of your PHI/PII that are for reasons other than payment and health care operations and are not disclosed through a signed authorization. We will disclose your PHI/PII to an individual who has been designated by you as your personal representative and who has qualified for such designation in accordance with relevant state law. However, before we will disclose PHI/PII to such a person, you must submit a written notice of his/her designation, along with the documentation that supports his/her qualification (such as a power of attorney). Even if you designate a personal representative, the HIPAA Privacy Rule permits us to elect not to treat the person as your personal representative if we have a reasonable belief that: (i) you have been, or may be, subjected to domestic violence, abuse, or neglect by such person; (ii) treating such person as your personal representative could endanger you; or (iii) we determine, in the exercise of our professional judgment, that it is not in your best interest to treat the person as your personal representative.

**Business Associates:** We contract with individuals and entities (Business Associates) to perform various functions on our behalf or to provide certain types of services. To perform these functions or to provide the services, our Business Associates will receive, create, maintain, use, or disclose PHI/PII, but only after we require the Business Associates to agree in writing to contract terms designed to appropriately safeguard your information. For example, we may disclose your PHI/PII to a Business Associate to administer claims or to provide member service or supports. Examples of Business Associates include service providers, health /dental/vision insurer or physicians.

**Other Covered Entities:** We may use or disclose your PHI/PII to assist providers in connection with their service, treatment or payment activities, or to assist other covered entities in connection with payment activities and certain health care operations. For example, we may disclose your PHI/PII to a health care provider when needed by the provider to render treatment to you, and we may disclose PHI/PII to another covered entity to conduct health care operations in the areas of quality assurance and improvement activities, or accreditation, certification, licensing or credentialing. This also means that we may disclose or share your PHI/PII with other insurance carriers in order to coordinate benefits, if you or your family members have coverage through another carrier.

**Plan Sponsor:** We may disclose your PHI/PII to the plan sponsor of the Group Health Plan for purposes of plan administration or pursuant to an authorization request signed by you.

### **Potential Impact of State Law**

The HIPAA Privacy Rule regulations generally do not “preempt” (or take precedence over) state privacy or other applicable laws that provide individuals greater privacy protections. As a result, to the extent state law applies, the privacy laws of a particular state, or other federal laws, rather than the HIPAA Privacy Rule regulations, might impose a privacy standard under which we will be required to operate. For example, where such laws have been enacted, we will follow more stringent state privacy laws that relate to uses and disclosures of PHI/PII concerning HIV or AIDS, mental health, substance abuse/chemical dependency, genetic testing, reproductive rights, etc.

### **YOUR RIGHTS**

The following is a description of your rights with respect to your PHI/PII.

**Right to Request a Restriction:** You have the right to request a restriction on the PHI/PII we use or disclose about you for service payment or health care operations. We are not required to agree to any restriction that you may request. If we do agree to the restriction, we will comply with the restriction unless the information is needed to provide emergency treatment to you. You may request a restriction by contacting the designated contact listed on the first page of this Notice. It is important that you direct your request for restriction to the designated contact so that we can begin to process your request. Requests sent to persons or offices other than the designated contact might delay processing the request. We will want to receive this information in writing and will instruct you where to send your request when you call. In your request, please tell us: (1) the information whose disclosure you want to limit; and (2) how you want to limit our use and/or disclosure of the information.

### **Right to Request Confidential Communications:**

If you believe that a disclosure of all or part of your PHI/PII may endanger you, you may request that we communicate with you regarding your information in an alternative manner or at an alternative location. For example, you may ask that we only contact you at your work address or via your work e-mail. You may request a restriction by contacting the designated contact listed on the first page of this Notice. It is important that you direct your request for confidential communications to the designated contact so that we can begin to process your request. Requests sent to persons or offices other than the one indicated might delay processing the request. We will want to receive this information in writing and will instruct you where to send your written request when you call. In your request, please tell us: (1) that you want us to communicate your PHI/PII with you in an alternative manner or at an alternative location; and (2) that the disclosure of all or part of the PHI/PII in a manner inconsistent with your instructions would put you in danger. We will accommodate a request for confidential communications that is reasonable and that states that the disclosure of all or part of your PHI/PII could endanger you. As permitted by the HIPAA Privacy Rule, "reasonableness" will (and is permitted to) include, when appropriate, making alternate arrangements regarding payment. Accordingly, as a condition of granting your request, you will be required to provide us information concerning how payment will be handled. For example, if you submit a claim for payment, state or federal law (or our own contractual obligations) may require that we disclose certain financial claim information to the plan participant (e.g., an Explanation of Benefits, or “EOB”). Unless you have made other payment arrangements, the EOB (in which your PHI/PII might be included) will be released to the plan participant. Once we receive all of the information for such a request (along with the instructions for handling future communications), the request will be processed usually within two business days. Prior to receiving the information necessary for this request, or during the time it takes to process it, PHI/PII might be disclosed (such as through an EOB). Therefore, it is extremely important that you contact the designated contact listed on the first page of this Notice as soon as you determine that you need to restrict disclosures of your PHI/PII. If you terminate your request for confidential communications, the restriction will be removed for all your PHI/PII that we hold, including PHI/PII that was previously protected. Therefore, you should not terminate a request for confidential communications if you remain concerned that disclosure of your PHI/PII will endanger you.

**Right to Inspect and Copy:** You have the right to inspect and copy your PHI/PII that is contained in a “designated record set.” Generally, a “designated record set” contains service/ medical and billing records, as well as other records that are used to make decisions about your health care benefits. However, you may not inspect or copy psychotherapy notes or certain other information that may be contained in a designated record set.

To inspect and copy your PHI/PII that is contained in a designated record set, you must submit your request to the designated contact listed on the first page of this Notice. It is important that you contact the designated contact to request an inspection and copying so that we can begin to process your request. Requests sent to persons, offices, other than the designated contact might delay processing the request. If you request a copy of the information, we may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing, or other supplies associated with your request. We may deny your request to inspect and copy your PHI/PII in certain limited circumstances. If you are denied access to your information, you may request that the denial be reviewed. To request a review, you must contact the designated contact listed on the first page of this Notice. A licensed professional chosen by us will review your request and the denial. The person performing this review will not be the same one who denied your initial request. Under certain conditions, our denial will not be reviewable. If this event occurs, we will inform you in our denial that the decision is not reviewable.

**Right to Amend:** If you believe that your PHI/PII is incorrect or incomplete, you may request that we amend your information. You may request that we amend your information by contacting the designated contact listed on the first page of this Notice. Additionally, your request should include the reason the amendment is necessary. It is important that you direct your request for amendment to the designated contact so that we can begin to process your request. Requests sent to persons or offices, other than the designated contact might delay processing the request. In certain cases, we may deny your request for an amendment. For example, we may deny your request if the information you want to amend is not maintained by us, but by another entity. If we deny your request, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us. Your statement of disagreement will be linked with the disputed information and all future disclosures of the disputed information will include your statement.

**Right of an Accounting:**

You have a right to an accounting of certain disclosures of your PHI/PII that are for reasons other than treatment, payment, or health care operations. No accounting of disclosures is required for disclosures made pursuant to a signed authorization by you or your personal representative. You should know that most disclosures of PHI/PII will be for purposes of payment or health care operations, and, therefore, will not be subject to your right to an accounting. There also are other exceptions to this right. An accounting will include the date(s) of the disclosure, to whom we made the disclosure, a brief description of the information disclosed, and the purpose for the disclosure. You may request an accounting by submitting your request in writing to the designated contact listed on the first page of this Notice. It is important that you direct your request for an accounting to the designated contact so that we can begin to process your request. Requests sent to persons or offices other than the designated contact might delay processing the request. Your request may be for disclosures made up to 6 years before the date of your request, but not for disclosures made before April 14, 2003. The first list you request within a 12-month period will be free. For additional lists, we may charge you for the costs of providing the list. We will notify you of the cost involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at the time before any costs are incurred.

**Right to a Copy of This Notice:** You have the right to request a copy of this Notice at any time by contacting the designated contact listed on the first page of this Notice. If you receive this Notice on our Website or by electronic mail, you also are entitled to request a paper copy of this Notice.

**HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT:**

You may complain to us if you believe that we have violated your privacy rights. You may file a complaint with us by using the following contact:

**Kay A. Koyack**  
**Venango County Human Services Complex**  
**1 Dale Avenue, Franklin, PA 16323**  
**(814)432-9126**  
**kkoyack@co.venango.pa.us.**

A copy of a complaint form is available from this contact office.

You also may file a complaint with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at [www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy). Complaints filed directly with the Secretary must: (1) be in writing; (2) contain the name of the entity against which the complaint is lodged; (3) describe the relevant problems; and (4) be filed within 180 days of the time you became or should have become aware of the problem.

We will not penalize or any other ways retaliate against you for filing a complaint with the Secretary or with us.