

HOSPICE



OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY

374 Hudlow Road, Post Office Box 336
Forest City, NC 28043
Phone: (828) 245-0095
FAX: (828) 248-1035
Toll Free: 1-800-218-CARE (2273)

PRIVACY PRACTICES

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW YOUR MEDICAL INFORMATION MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

USE AND DISCLOSURE OF HEALTH INFORMATION

Hospice may use your protected health information as defined in the Privacy Rule of the Administrative Simplification provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 and North Carolina statutes and regulations, for purposes of providing you treatment, obtaining payment for your care and conducting health care operations. Hospice has established policies to guard against unnecessary disclosure of your health information.

SUMMARY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND PURPOSES FOR WHICH YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED

To Provide Treatment

Hospice may use your health information to coordinate care within Hospice and with others involved in your care, such as your attending physician and other health care professionals who assist Hospice in coordinating care. For example, physicians involved in your care will need information about your symptoms in order to prescribe appropriate medications. Hospice may disclose your health information to individuals outside of Hospice involved in your care including family members, clergy and rest home personnel whom you have designated, pharmacists, suppliers of medical equipment or other health care professionals such as nursing home personnel.

To Obtain Payment

Hospice may include your health information in invoices to collect payment from third parties for your care. For example, Hospice may be required by your health insurer to provide information regarding your health status so that the insurer will reimburse you or Hospice. Hospice may need to obtain prior approval from your insurer and may need to explain to the insurer your need for hospice care and the services that will be provided to you.

To Conduct Health Care Operations

Hospice may use and disclose health information for operations in order to facilitate the function of Hospice and as necessary to provide quality care to all Hospice patients.

Health care operations includes such activities as:

- Quality assessment and improvement activities.
- Activities designed to improve health or reduce health care costs.
- Protocol development, case management and care coordination.
- Contacting health care providers and patients with information about treatment alternatives and other related functions that do not include treatment.
- Professional review and performance evaluation.
- Training programs including those in which students, trainees or practitioners in health care learn under supervision.
- Training of non-health care professionals.
- Review and auditing, including compliance reviews, medical reviews, legal services and compliance programs.
- Business planning and development including cost management and planning related analyses and formulary development.
- Business management and general administrative activities of Hospice.
- Fundraising for the benefit of Hospice.

For example, Hospice may use your health information to evaluate staff performance, combine your health information with other Hospice patients in evaluating how to more effectively serve all patients, disclose your health information to Hospice staff and contracted personnel for training purposes, use your health information to contact you as a reminder regarding a visit to you, or contact you as part of general fundraising and community information mailings.

Hospice may disclose certain information about you including your name, your general health status, your religious affiliation and where you are in the Hospice's facility in a directory while you are in the Hospice inpatient/residential facility. Hospice may disclose this information to people who are included in the consent form unless you notify us that you do not wish to be included in the directory.

For Fundraising Activities

Hospice may use information about you including your name, address, phone number and the dates you received care in order to contact you or your family to raise money for Hospice. If you do not want Hospice to contact you or your family, notify your social worker and indicate that you do not wish to be contacted by signing the appropriate form.

For Appointment Reminders

Hospice may use and disclose your health information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment for a home visit.

For Treatment Alternatives

Hospice may use and disclose your health information to tell you about possible treatment options or alternatives that may be of interest to you.

SUMMARY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND PURPOSES FOR WHICH YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION MAY ALSO BE USED AND DISCLOSED

When Legally Required

Hospice will disclose your health information when it is required to do so by any Federal, State or local law.

When There Are Risks to Public Health

Hospice may disclose your health information for public activities and purposes in order to:

- Prevent or control disease, injury or disability, report disease, injury, vital events such as

birth or death and the conduct of public health surveillance, investigations and interventions.

- Report adverse events, product defects, to track products or enable product recalls, repairs and replacements and to conduct post-marketing surveillance and compliance with requirements of the Food and Drug Administration.
- Notify a person who has been exposed to a communicable disease or who may be at risk of contracting or spreading a disease.
- Notify an employer about an individual who is a member of the workforce as legally required.

To Report Abuse, Neglect Or Domestic Violence

Hospice is allowed to notify government authorities if it believes a patient is the victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence. Hospice will make this disclosure only when specifically required or authorized by law or when the patient agrees to the disclosure.

To Conduct Health Oversight Activities

Hospice may disclose your health information to a health oversight hospice for activities including audits, civil administrative or criminal investigations, inspections, licensure or disciplinary action if you give permission in writing for this activity to take place. Hospice, however, may not disclose your health information if you are the subject of an investigation and your health information is not directly related to your receipt of health care or public benefits.

In Connection With Judicial And Administrative Proceedings

Hospice may disclose your health information in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding in response to a court order or administrative tribunal as expressly authorized by such order or in response to a subpoena, discovery request or other lawful process, but only when Hospice makes reasonable efforts to either notify you about the request or to obtain an order protecting your health information.

For Law Enforcement Purposes

As permitted or required by State law, Hospice may disclose your information to a law enforcement official as follows:

- As required by law for reporting of certain types of wounds or other physical injuries pursuant to the court order, warrant, subpoena or summons or similar process.
- For the purpose of identifying or locating a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person.

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- Under certain limited circumstances, when you are the victim of a crime.
- To a law enforcement official if Hospice has a suspicion that your death was the result of criminal conduct including criminal conduct at the Hospice facility.
- In an emergency in order to report a crime.

To Coroners and Medical Examiners

Hospice may disclose your health information to coroners and medical examiners for purposes of determining your cause of death or for other duties, as authorized by law.

To Funeral Directors

Hospice may disclose your health information to funeral directors consistent with applicable law and if necessary, to carry out their duties with respect to your funeral arrangements. If necessary to carry out their duties, Hospice may disclose health information prior to and in reasonable anticipation of your death.

For Research Purposes

Hospice may, under very select circumstances, use your health information for research. Before Hospice discloses any of your health information for such research purposes, the project will be subject to an extensive approval process.

In the Event of A Serious Threat To Health Or Safety

Hospice may, consistent with applicable law and ethical standards of conduct, disclose your health information if Hospice, in good faith, believes that such disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to your health or safety or to the health and safety of the public.

For Specified Government Functions

In certain circumstances, the Federal regulations authorize Hospice to use or disclose your health information to facilitate specified government functions relating to military and veterans, national security and intelligence activities, protective services for the President and others, medical suitability determinations and inmates and law enforcement custody.

For Worker's Compensation

Hospice may release your health information for worker's compensation or similar programs.

AUTHORIZATION TO USE OR DISCLOSE HEALTH INFORMATION

Other than is stated above, Hospice will not disclose your health information other than with your written authorization. If you or your representative authorize Hospice to use or disclose your health information, you may revoke that authorization in writing at any time.

YOUR RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION

You have the following rights regarding your health information that Hospice maintains:

Right to request restrictions. You may request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of your health information. You have the right to request a limit on Hospice's disclosure of your health information to someone who is involved in your care or the payment of your care. However, Hospice is not required to agree to your request. If you wish to make a request for restrictions, please contact Heidi Owen, Hospice Privacy Official.

Right to receive confidential communications. You have the right to request that Hospice communicate with you in a certain way. For example, you may ask that Hospice only conduct communications pertaining to your health information with you privately with no other family members present. If you wish to receive confidential communications, please contact the Hospice Privacy Official. Hospice will not request that you provide any reasons for your request and will attempt to honor your reasonable requests for confidential communications.

Right to inspect and copy your health information. You have the right to inspect and copy your health information, including billing records. A request to inspect and copy records containing your health information may be made to the Hospice Privacy Official. If you request a copy of your health information,

Hospice may charge a reasonable fee for copying and assembling costs.

Right to amend health care information. You or your representative have the right to request that Hospice amend your records, if you believe that your health information is incorrect or incomplete. That request may be made as long as the information is maintained by Hospice. A request for an amendment of records must be made in writing to the Hospice Privacy Official. Hospice may deny the request if it is not in writing or does not include a reason for the amendment. The request also may be denied if your health information records were not created by Hospice, if the records you are requesting are not part of Hospice's records, if the health information you wish to amend is not part of the health information you or your representative are permitted to inspect and copy, or if, in the opinion of Hospice, the records containing your health information are accurate and complete.

Right to an accounting. You or your representative have the right to request an accounting of disclosures of your health information made by Hospice for certain reasons, including reasons related to public purposes authorized by law and certain research. The request for an accounting must be made in writing to the Hospice Privacy Official. The request should specify the time period for an accounting starting on or after April 14, 2003. Accounting requests may not be made for periods of time in excess of six years. Hospice would provide the first accounting you request during any 12-month period without charge. Subsequent accounting requests may be subject to a reasonable cost-based fee.

Right to a paper copy of this notice. You or your representative have a right to a separate paper copy of this Notice at any time even if you or your representative have received this Notice previously. To obtain a separate copy, please contact Heidi Owen, Privacy Official at (828) 245-0095. A copy of the Notice may also be obtained at www.hospiceofrutherford.com.

EFFECTIVE APRIL 14, 2003

**Post Office Box 336
374 Hudlow Road
Forest City, NC 28043**

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Hospice is required by law to maintain the privacy of your health information and to provide to you and your representative this Notice of its duties and privacy practices. Hospice is required to abide by the terms of this Notice as it may be amended. Hospice reserves the right to change the terms of its Notice and to make the new Notice provisions effective for all health information that it maintains. If Hospice changes its Notice, Hospice will provide a copy of the revised Notice to you or your appointed representative. You or your personal representative have the right to express complaints to Hospice and to the Secretary of DHHS if you or your representative believe that your privacy rights have been violated. Any complaints to the Hospice should be made in writing to the Hospice Privacy Official at the address above. The Hospice encourages you to express any concerns you may have regarding the privacy of your information. You will not be retaliated against in any way for filing a complaint.