



St. Luke's Healthcare, Inc. 101 Hospital Dr. Columbus NC 28722

## **NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES**

**THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY.**

### **Who is getting your Medical Information?**

**(Written from the rules and regulations of the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act "HIPAA") Effective January 1, 2003**

**Welcome to St. Luke's Healthcare, Inc. We are pleased that you have chosen us as your health care provider and we assure you we will do everything we can do to provide you with the best care and treatment possible. Part of providing good care and treatment is making sure your medical information, which in this notice we will call "Protected Health Information" or "PHI" is kept secret when you want it kept secret, and communicate it to others when you want it communicated to others. St. Luke's Healthcare, Inc. is required by law to maintain the privacy of your PHI, to provide this notice to you explaining our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your PHI, and to abide by the terms of this notice.**

#### **This notice tells you three things.**

- (1) how and why we might use your PHI**
- (2) who might find out about your PHI**
- (3) how you can help us to treat your PHI the way you want it treated**

#### **What do we mean when we say your "PHI"?**

Every time you come to a doctor's office, or hospital, or clinic for treatment, PHI about you is created. For example, when you came to the hospital, you may have filled out a form telling the hospital who you are, where you live, and why you came to the hospital. If you did, you created PHI. During your stay at the hospital, your doctors, your nurses, and other people who take care of you will create more information about you, your condition, and how you are responding to treatment. All of this information, and other information, will be referred to in this notice as "your PHI". In general, "your PHI" includes information about:

- (1) your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition,**
- (2) the health care that you received, are receiving, or will receive, and**
- (3) the ways that you have paid for, are paying for, or will pay for, your health care.**

#### **Why does anyone else want to know about your PHI?**

Your PHI is important. Consequently, a lot of people want to know about it. Most people want to know about your PHI for good reasons. For example, a doctor who is planning to do surgery on you needs to know if you have had any illnesses that will change the way he should do the surgery. Likewise, a scientist who is doing research needs to know if you felt better or worse after taking the medicine he is

studying. Although there are many more reasons why people might want to know about your PHI, it is important for you to realize that most people who get your PHI get it so that they can help you or help others.

## **How does St. Luke's Hospital Use Your PHI?**

St. Luke's Hospital, uses your PHI for many purposes—so many purposes, in fact, that it is impossible to list every one here. Below, we have listed some of the main, general purposes for which we use and, sometimes, tell others about your PHI.

### **1. For Treatment**

We often use and tell others about your PHI so that we can help you to receive good-quality treatment and care. Sometimes we will tell only people inside the hospital about your PHI. For example, if you tell the nurse at the front desk that you are allergic to penicillin, he will tell the doctor who is treating you so that she does not give you penicillin. Other times, though, we will tell people outside the hospital about your PHI. For example, if you are from Florida and return to a hospital near your home after receiving treatment at St. Luke's Hospital, we will, after receiving a proper request, tell people at your Florida hospital about you, your condition, and the care and treatment we have provided.

### **2. For Payment**

It is a fact of life that the medical treatment and care you receive at St. Luke's Hospital must be paid for. Therefore, we tell others—like billing departments, collection agencies, insurance companies, health plans, hospital departments, and consumer reporting agencies—about your PHI so that we can send you, another person, an insurance company, or the government, a bill for our services and/or can collect payment for our services. Usually, we send your PHI to others *after* you have received treatment. But sometimes we send your PHI to others *before* you receive treatment so that we can make sure in advance that your treatment will be paid for.

### **3. For Our Health Care Operations**

Every day St. Luke's Hospital looks at how it can run its business more efficiently, more safely, and more effectively. In exploring these possibilities, we often use your PHI. For example, we might use your PHI when applying for insurance for our buildings. Or we might use your PHI when evaluating our doctors' performances. Or we might use your PHI when exploring ways to better manage or administer our business. The end result of these efforts, we hope, is that you will receive better care and better service each time that you come to St. Luke's Hospital.

### **4. To Make Sure That We Are Providing Good Services**

We are always trying to improve the quality of the services we provide—and to make sure that these services are the services you and others really want. Your PHI and your ideas are very important to us in this regard. If you felt better having a new kind of surgery performed, we would want other doctors to know about that so that they could perform that new kind of surgery on their patients. Similarly, if a patient felt better after sleeping in a special kind of bed, we would want to know that so that we could look into purchasing that kind of bed for other patients. It is important for you to know that we do not always use your name, age, gender, or other information that could be used to identify you, when we are using your PHI.

### **5. To Remind You About Appointments**

Not all uses of your PHI are exciting and dramatic. We may sometimes use or tell others about your PHI so that we can make sure you show up to your scheduled appointments on time. No, it is not exciting, but it sure is helpful when you're having a busy week.

### **6. To Let You Know About Other Treatments**

Sometimes we learn of a new treatment that may be helpful to you. In these situations, we might use or tell others about your PHI so that we can let you know about all the treatment options that are available to you.

### **7. To Raise Money**

We may disclose your PHI to St. Luke's Hospital Foundation, Inc. in order to contact you in an effort to raise money for the hospital and the services it offers to the community. In such cases, we would limit your PHI to demographic information, such as your name, address and phone number and the dates you

received treatment or services. We would not release information which would identify the reasons you were receiving treatment, e.g. diagnosis, etc. If you do not want the hospital to contact you for fundraising efforts, you must notify the Director of the Medical Records Department in writing.

#### **8. To Let You Know About Other Services**

We sometimes use and let others know about your PHI so that you can be told about services or benefits that you may want to take advantage of.

#### **9. Where You Are and How You Are Doing**

It is often important for other people to know where you are and how you are doing. For example, if there is a major flood near your house, your out-of-town family or friends will want to know that you are safe. St. Luke's Hospital may help get this information out by sharing your PHI with your family and friends and, when necessary, disaster relief agencies like the Red Cross. We may also share your PHI with members of your family or friends who are helping you by providing care and treatment or by paying some or all of your medical bills.

#### **10. To Put Your Name in the Hospital Directory**

St. Luke's Hospital keeps a Hospital Directory that lists all of our patients, our patients' room numbers, and, if applicable, our patients' religions. We use this Directory for many purposes. For example, we use the Directory to locate your room when your friends and family members come to visit you. We also use the Directory to let members of the clergy know that you are in the hospital (upon your request) so that you can receive whatever spiritual care you need. If you come to the hospital for care or treatment, we will use your PHI to create an entry about you in our Directory *unless you tell us not to*.

#### **11. To Do Research**

Almost everything that the world knows about medicine comes from research. Sometimes research is very easy to do. A scientist may be able to find out if medicine X works better than medicine Y just by comparing the conditions of one patient who took medicine X and one patient who took medicine Y. Other times, though, research is very difficult to do. A scientist who wants to know if smoking hurts men more than women might have to look at PHI from hundreds of men and hundreds of women. Whether research is easy or difficult to do, it is very important that it be done. Thus, we sometimes use or let others use your PHI for research purposes. But don't worry! We are very careful about the use of your PHI and your identity will be protected.

#### **12. To Comply With the Law**

Sometimes a state, federal or local law will make us use or tell others about your PHI. In such a case, we do what the law requires us to do.

#### **13. To Promote Safety and Prevent Danger**

If a person came into the hospital with a serious disease that you could catch, you would probably want to know about it. Not surprisingly, the reverse is also true. So St. Luke's Hospital may use or let others know about your PHI if your condition or something about your being in the hospital threatens your health or the health of other people. In this type of case, we will share your PHI only with people who can help prevent the threat and people who are directly threatened.

#### **14. To Respond to Emergencies**

In some emergency situations, there simply is not enough time to get your consent before we use and share your PHI. In such situations, we will use and share your PHI as much as is needed to properly treat you. Then, we will work to get your consent as soon as possible, after things have calmed down.

#### **15. To Overcome Communication Barriers**

If one of our health care providers is unable to communicate with you but needs to use or share your PHI quickly, that provider may decide to use and share your PHI before getting your consent to do so. If this situation arises, St. Luke's Hospital will try to get your consent as soon after we have used and shared your PHI as is possible.

#### **Are there any other ways that St. Luke's Hospital uses your PHI?**

Believe it or not, there are other ways that we use your PHI, too. However, because these other uses are rare and involve special situations, they are listed separately. They are:

### **1. To Help Make Organ and Tissue Donation Possible**

Every year, thousands of people benefit from donated organs, tissues and eyes. But these people can only benefit if St. Luke's Hospital and other organizations know about people who are willing to donate. If you are one of these people, we may use or let others know about your PHI so that donations and transplants can continue to be used to help people in need.

### **2. To Provide Information to Military Authorities**

If you are a member of the United States armed forces, we may have to share your PHI with U.S. military command authorities. Likewise, if you are a member of another country's armed forces, we may have to share your PHI with your country's military command authorities.

### **3. To Help Your Employer Provide You Benefits**

If you got the sickness or injury that put you in the hospital while you were working, then St. Luke's Hospital may have to share your PHI with your employer so that it can pay, or help pay, for your care and treatment.

### **4. To Promote Public Health**

We at St. Luke's Hospital may use or share with others your PHI to promote public health. Generally, the information we share for public health purposes is used: (a) to prevent or control disease, injury, or disability; (b) to monitor births and deaths; (c) to help prevent child abuse and neglect; (d) to let the public know about bad drugs or bad medical products; (e) to let the public know about product recalls; (f) to let the public know about diseases and conditions that they may have been exposed to or may spread; (g) to let the police or other authorities know about patients who, we suspect, are victims of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. Importantly, we only give out the kind of information discussed in section (g) if we are required or allowed to do so by law or by you.

### **5. To Help the Government and Businesses Make Sure We Are Doing Good Work In a Good Way**

The government, accrediting organizations and many businesses watch over St. Luke's Hospital to make sure we are doing our job the correct way. For example, the state of North Carolina inspects St. Luke's Hospital from time to time to make sure that we are complying with state laws. St. Luke's Hospital may share your PHI with the government or its inspectors and investigators to let them know that we are following the rules.

### **6. To Comply With a Court Order, Subpoena or Legal Request for Your Bill**

If you are involved in a lawsuit or another kind of legal dispute, we may have to share your PHI with the court, the lawyers, and other people involved in the dispute. Usually, we will give out your PHI only after we have received a subpoena, a court order or some other kind of legal request or demand.

### **7. To Help Law Enforcement Do Its Job**

Part of being a good citizen is helping the police and other law-enforcement authorities do their job. We do our part by sharing your PHI, in limited circumstances and to a limited extent, in order: (a) to comply with a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons, or other legal request for information or evidence; (b) to help identify a criminal, missing person, crime suspect or a material witness in a criminal case; (c) to help identify the victim of a crime; (d) to help the authorities investigate a death that might be the result of a crime; (e) to help the authorities investigate a crime that has occurred at the hospital; and (f) to report a crime or the location of a crime, criminal, suspect, or crime victim.

### **8. To Determine A Cause of Death And To Help Funeral Directors Do Their Jobs**

When you die, it may be important for others to know how or why you died and how you wanted your body taken care of. For this reason, we may share your PHI with coroners, medical examiners, funeral directors, and others who can help make sure that the cause of your death is understood and your preferences for your burial or cremation are carried out.

### **9. To Promote National Security and Intelligence**

From time to time, we are asked to share your PHI with federal officials who are in charge of national security, national intelligence, and national counterintelligence. If required to do so by law, we will use or share your PHI in response to such a request.

## **10. To Help Those Who Protect the President and Other Heads of State**

The people who protect the President of the United States and leaders of other foreign countries need a lot of information to do their jobs well. In fact, sometimes the information they need may even include your PHI. If such a need arises, we will let security people know about your PHI to the extent required by law.

## **11. To Help Prison Wardens and Law-Enforcement Authorities**

If you are in jail, on parole, or under the custody of the law-enforcement authorities, we may have to share your PHI with your jailor, parole officer, or law-enforcement official. This sharing is necessary: (a) to permit us to give you health care, (b) to make sure that you and others are safe, and (c) to make sure that your jail or correctional facility is safe and secure.

### **How will your PHI be disclosed?**

In order to efficiently coordinate treatment, payment, and health care operations aspects of your care, we may disclose your PHI in any format that we determine is secure and expeditious, e.g., verbally, electronically, via fax, and/or in paper form.

### **What are your rights?**

So far, we've told you a lot about how we can use and share your PHI. The next part of this notice tells you how you can use your PHI and keep your PHI from being shared. In other words, it talks about your rights, which include:

#### **1. Your Right to Look At and Copy Your PHI**

You have a right to look at and copy almost all of your PHI, except for your psychotherapy notes. To take advantage of this right, you must write a letter to the Director of the Medical Records Department, asking to see and copy your PHI. We may charge you for copying, mailing or doing other things with your PHI. We may also, in rare cases, deny your request. If we do, you can have us choose a licensed health care professional to review our decision. We may change our decision if the professional tells us to.

#### **2. Your Right to Ask For an Amendment to Your PHI**

If you do not think that your PHI is complete or correct, you have the right to ask us to change it. To exercise this right, you must write a letter to the Director of the Medical Records Department, telling why you think your PHI should be changed. We can deny your request for amendment if you forget to ask us in writing or to give us a reason for the change. We can also deny your request if the PHI you are asking us to change: (a) was not created by us (unless the person who created the PHI you want to change can no longer change the information himself); (b) is not part of the PHI we keep; (c) is not part of the PHI that you have a right to look at and copy; or (d) is already complete and accurate.

#### **3. Your Right to Find Out Who We Have Shared Your PHI With**

You have a right to know the names of the people or businesses with whom we have shared your PHI. To exercise this right, you must send a letter to the Director of the Medical Records Department, stating that you want an "accounting of disclosures". You must include in your letter a couple of sentences telling the Director: (a) the date(s) upon which the PHI you want to see was created (Note: No two dates may be more than 6 years apart), and (b) in what form you would like to receive the "accounting" (i.e; paper; electronic file if available, etc.) We cannot provide an "accounting" for any of your PHI that is more than 6 years old. Also, although we will give you the first "accounting" free of charge, we will charge you for each subsequent "accounting" that you ask for in a 12-month period. We will let you know in advance how much these costs will be so you can withdraw or change your request, if necessary.

#### **4. Your Right to Keep Us From Sharing Your PHI**

In some circumstances, you have a right to keep us from sharing your PHI. For example, you have a right to limit the amount of your PHI that we share for treatment, payment or hospital improvement purposes. You also have a right to limit the amount of your PHI that we share with your friends and family members who are involved in your care or paying for your care. To exercise these rights, you have to write a letter to the Director of the Medical Records Department, stating: (a) what parts of your PHI you want us to stop using or sharing; (b) whether you want us to stop *using* those parts of your PHI, *sharing* those parts of your PHI, or both; and (c) with whom (including ourselves, if applicable) we should keep from sharing your PHI.

#### **5. Your Right to Tell Us How and Where To Talk To You About Your PHI**

You have a right to have us talk to you about your PHI in a certain way or at a certain place. For example,

you can let us know if you only want us to talk to you about your PHI when you are at home. To exercise this right, write a letter to the Director of the Medical Records Department, telling what you would like us to do. You do not need to give us a reason. We will do what we can to comply with all of your reasonable requests.

#### **6. Your Right to Get a Copy of This Notice**

If you have enjoyed reading this notice, we have good news. You have a right to receive another copy of it! To exercise this right, just write a letter to the Director of the Medical Records Department, stating that you would like a copy of our HIPAA “NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES”.

#### **Isn't there any more legal information I can read?**

Luckily for you, we have a few more loose ends to tie up. Here goes...

#### **Changes To This Notice**

We reserve the right to change or add to this notice at any time, for any reason. Each new edition of this notice will have its effective date posted on it. We will offer you a copy of the most-recent edition of this notice each time you register at or are admitted to the hospital for inpatient or outpatient services. Only the most-recent edition of this notice will establish the rules under which we will operate and the scope of your rights. Thus, the fact that your PHI may have been, or may be, created when another version of this notice was, or is, in effect shall have no bearing on the scope or number of your rights - you cannot “lock-in” any rights - you enjoyed under a prior edition of this notice, but do not enjoy under the most-recent edition of this notice.

#### **Complaints**

If you think that your right to keep your PHI secret has been violated, you may file a complaint with us or the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with us, please write a letter that details your complaint and send it to the St. Luke's Hospital Corporate Privacy Officer. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.

#### **Uses and Disclosures of PHI Not Covered by This Notice**

Uses and disclosures of your PHI that are not discussed in this notice will only be made if you give us written authorization. And you can take back or cancel at any time any permission that you give us. Although we will not be able to take back information that we have already released, we can make sure that information that you do not want released will not be released in the future.

#### **St. Luke's Healthcare, Inc.**

The information in this notice also applies to the subsidiary corporations of St. Luke's Healthcare, Inc.: St. Luke's Hospital, Inc., St. Luke's Hospital Foundation, Inc. and Community Health Connections, Inc. Privacy notification and complaints are processed by St. Luke's Hospital, Inc.'s Medical Records Director (Corporate Privacy Officer).

#### **Mailing Address**

St. Luke's Hospital, Inc.  
Corporate Privacy Officer  
Medical Records Department  
101 Hospital Drive  
Columbus, NC 28722

**This Notice of Privacy Practices may be accessed via the St. Luke's Hospital Website at [www.saintlukeshospital.com](http://www.saintlukeshospital.com).**

