

This notice describes the privacy practices of Garfield County Public Health and all health care staff, volunteers and other personnel who work for or on behalf of that office. Please review it carefully.

A law called HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) requires Garfield County Public Health to provide this notice to you.

As a user of the services of Garfield County Public Health or the parent/legal guardian of a minor who is a user of services please read this notice.

OUR PLEDGE REGARDING YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION

We understand that your health information is both personal and sensitive in nature. We are committed to protecting the privacy of this information. Each time you visit Garfield County Public Health Nursing we create a record of the services that you receive. We need this record to provide you with quality care and to comply with certain legal requirements. This notice applies to all of the records of your care generated by this office.

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

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Our primary responsibility for your personal health information is to keep it safe. We must also give you this notice of privacy practices and we must follow the terms of this notice.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

The following categories describe different ways in which we use your health information and release your health information to persons outside this office. We have not listed every use or release of information within the categories, but all permitted uses will fall within one of the following categories:

Treatment – We may use or disclose your health information to provide you with medical treatment and health-care services. We may share your health information with doctors, nurses, technicians, medical students, interns or other personnel who are involved in taking care of you during your visit with us or elsewhere for continuity of care.

Payment – We may use or disclose your health information so the treatment and services you receive may be billed to and payment collected from you, the insurance company or a third party. This may include the release of health information to obtain prior authorization for treatment and procedures from your insurance plan.

Health Care Operations – These uses or disclosures are necessary to operate our healthcare facility and make sure all of our clients receive quality care. Some of these uses may include quality assurance activities, granting medical staff credentials, nurse administrative activities, which include business planning and development, and customer service activities including investigation of complaints.

Business Associates – There are some services provided in our organization through contracts with third parties who are business associates of Garfield County Nursing. We may share your health information with our business associates so that they can perform the job we've asked them to do. We require our business associates to sign a contract that states they will appropriately protect your information. Examples of a business associate would be quality assurance reviewers and auditors.

Appointment Reminders- We may use health information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment for treatment or medical care at our healthcare facility.

Marketing or Fundraising – We may contact you as part of a marketing and/or fundraising effort for Garfield County Public Health.

Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for your Care – We may share your health information with a friend or family member who is involved in your medical care, unless you tell us in advance not to do so. In addition, we may share your health information with an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort (such as the Red Cross) so that your family can be notified about your condition, status, and location.

SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE YOUR SPECIFIC WRITTEN “AUTHORIZATION”

Other uses of health information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written permission (called “authorization”). If you authorize us to use or share your health information, you may cancel that authorization in writing at any time. If you cancel your authorization, we will no longer use or share health information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. We are unable to take back any information we have already shared with your permission, and we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you. Some typical situations that require your authorization are as follows: Research Involving your Treatment, Drug and Alcohol Abuse Treatment Information, Disclosure of Mental Health Treatment Information.

SITUATIONS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE YOUR VERBAL AGREEMENT OR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION

The following uses of your health information are permitted by law without any oral or written permission from you:

Organ and Tissue Donation – If you are an organ donor, we may share your health information with organizations that handle organ procurement or organ, eye or tissue transplantation or with an organ donation bank as necessary to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation.

Military and Veterans – If you are a member of the armed forces, we may share your health information as required by a military command authorities.

Worker’s Compensation – We may share your health information for worker’s compensation or similar programs if you have a work related injury. These programs provide benefits for work related injuries.

Averting a Serious Threat to Health or Safety – We may use and share your health information when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health or safety or the health and safety of another person or the public. This information would only be shared with someone able to help prevent the threat.

Public Health Activities – We may share your health information for public health activities. These generally include the following:

- to prevent or control disease, injury or disability;
- to report births and deaths;
- to report child abuse or neglect;
- to report reactions to medications, problems with products or other adverse events;
- to notify people of recalls of products they may be using;
- to notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition;
- to notify the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse (including child abuse), neglect or domestic violence. We will only share this information if you agree or when required or authorized by law.

Health Oversight Activities – We may share your health information with a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include audits, investigations, inspections and licensure. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs and compliance with civil rights laws.

Lawsuits and Disputes – If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may share your health information in response to a court or administrative order. We may share your health information in response to a subpoena, discovery request or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute.

Law Enforcement – We may share your health information if asked to do so by law enforcement officials in the following circumstances:

- when we receive a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons or similar process;
- to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person;
- when the patient is the victim of a crime if we are unable to obtain the person’s agreement;
- when we believe the patient’s death may be the result of criminal conduct;
- criminal conduct at our facility;
- in emergency circumstances to report a crime, the location of the crime or victims, or the identity, description or location of the person who committed the crime.

Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Home Directors - We may share your health information with a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death of a person. We may also share health information about patients at our facility with funeral home directors as necessary to carry out their duties.

National Security and Intelligence Activities – We may share your health information with authorized federal officials for intelligence, counterintelligence and other national security activities authorized by law.

Inmates – If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under custody of a law enforcement official, we may share your health information with the correctional institution or the law enforcement official. This is necessary for the correctional institution to provide you with healthcare, to protect your health and safety and the health and safety of others, or for the safety and security of the correctional institution.

Legal Requirements – We will share your health information without your permission when required to do so by federal, state or local law.

YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION RIGHTS

Although your health record is the physical property of Garfield County Public Health because Garfield County Public Health created it, the information in the health record belongs to you.

You have the right to:

Request a restriction on certain uses of your protected health information. We are not required by law to agree to your request.

Obtain a copy of this Notice of Privacy Practices upon request.

Inspect and request a copy of your protected health information for a fee. We may deny your request under limited circumstances. If we deny you access to health information, you may request that the denial be reviewed by another health care professional chosen by someone on our healthcare team. We will abide by the outcome of that review.

Request an amendment to your health record if you feel the information is incorrect or incomplete. We may deny your request for an amendment if:

- it is not in writing,
- does not include a reason to support the request,
- the information was not created by our healthcare team,
- it is not part of the information kept by our facility,
- it is not part of the information which you would be permitted to inspect and copy,
- the information already in the record is accurate and complete.

Please note that even if we accept your request, we are not required to delete any information from your health record. If we disagree with your request you have the right to submit a statement of disagreement to be enclosed with future releases of the information in question.

Obtain a record of the sharing/disclosures of your health information. The accounting will only list information shared for purposes other than treatment, payment or healthcare operations and will exclude information that was shared because of a valid authorization.

Request communication of your health information by alternative means or to alternative locations. We will honor reasonable requests when you provide the alternative address/contact information and information on how payment will be handled.

Revoke your authorization to use or share health information except to the extent that action has already been taken.

Complaints: If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file complaint with the Garfield County Public Health Compliance Officer or the Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights, toll free at 1-866-627-7749. Complaints filed with the Garfield County Public Health Office must be submitted in writing. We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

Complaint Information:

Garfield County Public Health Nursing Service

Attn: Mary Meisner, Compliance Officer

195 W. 14th Street

Rifle, CO 81650

We reserve the right to change this notice. We reserve the right to make the revised or changed notice effective for health information we already have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. We will post a copy of the current notice in our facilities, and it will be posted on our web site at <http://www.garfield-county.com>