



## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

**THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL 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 (Notice) is provided to you pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 and its implementing regulations (HIPAA), as amended. It is designed to tell you how we may, under federal law, use or disclose your Protected Health Information (PHI) to carry out treatment, payment or health care operations and for other purposes that are permitted or required by law. It also describes your rights to access and control your PHI. PHI is information about you, including demographic information, that may identify you and that relates to your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition and related health care services.

HIPAA is a federal law, which places limitations on the types of uses and disclosures health care providers, and others may make of PHI. At times, state or other regulations may afford more protection of your PHI or provide additional patient rights that exceed those under HIPAA. Some examples of categories of information that are afforded such additional protection under Georgia law include: HIV/AIDS; drug and alcohol treatment records; and mental health treatment records. In these and all other applicable cases, JCLPHCC will abide by the most stringent of the regulations as they pertain to PHI, including obtaining your prior written consent, as required, before any such information is disclosed to a third party. These restrictions also apply to the sharing of any such special categories of information through the ChathamHealthLink Health Information Exchange (HIE).

This Notice covers all J.C. Lewis Primary Health Care Center (JCLPHCC) facilities, programs, employees, volunteers, and interns. The information contained in the record of your medical care generated by JCLPHCC is referred to as protected health information. For obstetrical patients, this Notice covers the use or disclosure of PHI related to both you and your baby/babies. This Notice applies to all PHI about you that is maintained by JCLPHCC, including any such information that is maintained in paper or electronic form, or spoken. This includes records of your care maintained by JCLPHCC, whether created by JCLPHCC employees, consulting providers, or others covered by this Notice. This Notice also describes how authorized health care providers may use and disclose your PHI electronically through the ChathamHealthLink Health Information Exchange HIE. You can get additional information about the ChathamHealthLink HIE by visiting [www.chathamsafetynet.org/chatham-healthlink-hie/](http://www.chathamsafetynet.org/chatham-healthlink-hie/).

We are required to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices. We may change the terms of our notice, at any time. The new notice will be effective for all protected health information that we maintain at that time. Upon your request, we will provide you with any

revised Notice of Privacy Practices. You may request a revised version by accessing our website, or calling the office and requesting that a revised copy be sent to you in the mail or asking for one at the time of your next appointment.

## 1. USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION UNDER HIPAA

Your PHI may be used and disclosed by your provider, our office staff and others outside of our office who are involved in your care and treatment for the purpose of providing health care services to you. Your protected health information may also be used and disclosed to pay your health care bills and to support the operation of our office.

Following are examples of the types of uses and disclosures of your PHI that we are permitted to make. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive, but to describe the types of uses and disclosures that may be made by our office.

**Treatment:** We will use and disclose your protected health information to provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and any related services. This includes the coordination or management of your health care with another provider. For example, we would disclose your PHI, as necessary, to a home health agency that provides care to you. We will also disclose protected health information to other providers who may be treating you. For example, your protected health information may be provided to a physician to whom you have been referred to ensure that the physician has the necessary information to diagnose or treat you. In addition, we may disclose your PHI from time-to-time to another physician or health care provider (*e.g.*, a specialist or laboratory) who, at the request of your provider, becomes involved in your care by providing assistance with your health care diagnosis or treatment to your physician.

In addition, unless you opt-out, any authorized health care provider who agrees to participate in the ChathamHealthLink HIE can also electronically access and use your protected health information if needed to provide treatment to you. For instance, if you receive a blood test from one provider in the ChathamHealthLink HIE network, but then are treated by a different provider in the ChathamHealthLink HIE network, both of your treating providers can share your test results electronically through the secure ChathamHealthLink HIE network, as long as they are otherwise authorized to do so. Opting out of the HIE will not impact access granted by a Release of Information (RIO) in accordance with this Notice and the law.

**Payment:** Your protected health information will be used and disclosed, as needed, to obtain payment for your health care services provided by us or by another provider. This may include certain activities that your health insurance plan may undertake before it approves or pays for the health care services we recommend for you such as: making a determination of eligibility or coverage for insurance benefits, reviewing services provided to you for medical necessity, and undertaking utilization review activities. For example, obtaining approval for a hospital stay may require that your relevant protected health information be disclosed to the health plan to obtain approval for the hospital admission.

**Health Care Operations:** We may use or disclose, as needed, your PHI in order to support the business activities of our office. These activities include, but are not limited to, quality assessment/improvement activities, employee review activities, training of medical students, licensing, fundraising activities, and conducting or arranging for other business activities.

We will share your protected health information with third party “business associates” that perform various activities (for example, billing or transcription services) on behalf of JCLPHCC. Whenever an arrangement between our office and a business associate involves the use or disclosure of your protected health information, we will have a written contract that contains terms that will protect the privacy of your PHI.

We may use or disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to provide you with information about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you. You may contact our Privacy Officer to request that these materials not be sent to you.

**Other Permitted and Required Uses and Disclosures That May Be Made Without Your Authorization or Opportunity to Agree or Object**

We may use or disclose your PHI in the following situations without your authorization or providing you the opportunity to agree or object. These situations include:

**Required By Law:** We may use or disclose your protected health information to the extent that the use or disclosure is required by law. The use or disclosure will be made in compliance with the law and will be limited to the relevant requirements of the law. You will be notified, if required by law, of any such uses or disclosures.

**Public Health:** We may disclose your protected health information for public health activities and purposes to a public health authority that is permitted by law to collect or receive the information. For example, a disclosure may be made for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability.

**Communicable Diseases:** We may disclose your protected health information, if authorized by law, to a person who may have been exposed to a communicable disease or may otherwise be at risk of contracting or spreading the disease or condition.

**Health Oversight:** We may disclose protected health information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as audits, investigations, and inspections. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies that oversee the health care system, government benefit programs, other government regulatory programs and civil rights laws.

**Abuse or Neglect:** We may disclose your protected health information to a public health authority that is authorized by law to receive reports of child abuse or neglect. In addition, we may disclose your protected health information if we believe that you have been a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence to the governmental entity or agency authorized to receive

such information. In this case, the disclosure will be made consistent with the requirements of applicable federal and state laws.

**Food and Drug Administration:** We may disclose your protected health information to a person or company required by the Food and Drug Administration for the purpose of quality, safety, or effectiveness of FDA-regulated products or activities including, to report adverse events, product defects or problems, biologic product deviations, to track products; to enable product recalls; to make repairs or replacements, or to conduct post marketing surveillance, as required.

**Legal Proceedings:** We may disclose protected health information in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding, in response to an order of a court or administrative tribunal (to the extent such disclosure is expressly authorized), or in certain conditions in response to a subpoena, discovery request or other lawful process.

**Law Enforcement:** We may also disclose protected health information, so long as applicable legal requirements are met, for law enforcement purposes. These law enforcement purposes include (1) legal processes and otherwise required by law, (2) limited information requests for identification and location purposes, (3) pertaining to victims of a crime, (4) suspicion that death has occurred as a result of criminal conduct, (5) in the event that a crime occurs on our premises, and (6) medical emergency (not on our premises) and it is likely that a crime has occurred.

**Coroners, Funeral Directors, and Organ Donation:** We may disclose protected health information to a coroner or medical examiner for identification purposes, determining cause of death or for the coroner or medical examiner to perform other duties authorized by law. We may also disclose protected health information to a funeral director, as authorized by law, in order to permit the funeral director to carry out their duties. We may disclose such information in reasonable anticipation of death. Protected health information may be used and disclosed for cadaveric organ, eye or tissue donation purposes.

**Research:** We may disclose your protected health information to researchers when their research has been approved by an institutional review board that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your protected health information.

**Criminal Activity:** Consistent with applicable federal and state laws, we may disclose your protected health information, if we believe that the use or disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public. We may also disclose protected health information if it is necessary for law enforcement authorities to identify or apprehend an individual.

**Military Activity and National Security:** When the appropriate conditions apply, we may use or disclose protected health information of individuals who are Armed Forces personnel (1) for activities deemed necessary by appropriate military command authorities; (2) for the purpose of a determination by the Department of Veterans Affairs of your eligibility for benefits, or (3) to foreign military authority if you are a member of that foreign military services. We may also disclose your protected health information to authorized federal officials for conducting national

security and intelligence activities, including for the provision of protective services to the President or others legally authorized.

**Workers' Compensation:** We may disclose your protected health information as authorized to comply with workers' compensation laws and other similar legally-established programs.

**Inmates:** We may use or disclose your protected health information if you are an inmate of a correctional facility and your provider created or received your protected health information in the course of providing care to you.

**Health Information Exchange (HIE):** JCLPHCC and other health care providers participate in a HIE which allows patient information to be shared electronically. The Health Information Exchange allows for immediate electronic access to your participating health care providers and health plans' pertinent medical information necessary for treatment, payment and operations. If you have not opted-out (in writing) of the HIE, your information will be available to participating health care providers and health plans in accordance with this Notice and the law.

### **Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information Based upon Your Written Authorization**

Other uses and disclosures of your PHI will be made only with your written authorization, unless otherwise permitted or required by law as described below. You may revoke this authorization in writing at any time. If you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your protected health information for the reasons covered by your written authorization. Please understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures already made with your authorization.

### **Other Permitted and Required Uses and Disclosures That Require Providing You the Opportunity to Agree or Object**

We may use and disclose your protected health information in the following instances. You have the opportunity to agree or object to the use or disclosure of all or part of your protected health information. If you are not present or able to agree or object to the use or disclosure of the protected health information, then your physician may, using professional judgment, determine whether the disclosure is in your best interest.

**Facility Directories:** Unless you object, we will use and disclose in our facility directory your name, the location at which you are receiving care, your general condition (such as fair or stable), and your religious affiliation. All of this information, except religious affiliation, will be disclosed to people that ask for you by name. Your religious affiliation will be only given to a member of the clergy, such as a priest or rabbi.

**Others Involved in Your Health Care or Payment for your Care:** Unless you object, we may disclose to a member of your family, a relative, a close friend or any other person you identify, your protected health information that directly relates to that person's involvement in your health care. If you are unable to agree or object to such a disclosure, we may disclose such information as necessary if we determine that it is in your best interest based on our professional judgment. We may use or disclose protected health information to notify or assist in notifying a family

member, personal representative or any other person that is responsible for your care of your location, general condition or death. Finally, we may use or disclose your protected health information to an authorized public or private entity to assist in disaster relief efforts and to coordinate uses and disclosures to family or other individuals involved in your health care.

## 2. YOUR RIGHTS

Following is a statement of your rights with respect to your protected health information and a brief description of how you may exercise these rights.

**You have the right to inspect and copy your protected health information.** This means you may inspect and obtain a copy of protected health information about you for so long as we maintain the protected health information. You may obtain your medical record that contains medical and billing records and any other records that your provider and the practice use for making decisions about you. As permitted by federal or state law, we may charge you a reasonable copy fee for a copy of your records.

Under federal law, however, you may not inspect or copy the following records: psychotherapy notes; information compiled in reasonable anticipation of, or use in, a civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceeding; and laboratory results that are subject to law that prohibits access to protected health information. Depending on the circumstances, a decision to deny access may be reviewable. In some circumstances, you may have a right to have this decision reviewed. Please contact our Privacy Officer if you have questions about access to your medical record.

**You have the right to request a restriction of your protected health information.** This means you may ask us not to use or disclose any part of your protected health information for the purposes of treatment, payment or health care operations. You may also request that any part of your PHI not be disclosed to family members or friends who may be involved in your care or for notification purposes as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices. Your request must state the specific restriction requested and to whom you want the restriction to apply.

Your provider is not required to agree to a restriction that you may request. If your provider does agree to the requested restriction, we may not use or disclose your PHI in violation of that restriction unless it is needed to provide emergency treatment. With this in mind, please discuss any restriction you wish to request with your provider. Any such requests for restrictions must be in writing, be addressed to the Privacy Officer and state the specific restriction(s) requested and to whom you want the restriction(s) to apply.

**You have the right to request to receive confidential communications from us by alternative means or at an alternative location.** We will accommodate reasonable requests. We may also condition this accommodation by asking you for information as to how payment will be handled or specification of an alternative address or other method of contact. We will not request an explanation from you as to the basis for the request. Please make this request in writing to our Privacy Officer.

**You may have the right to have your provider amend your protected health information.**

This means you may request an amendment of protected health information about you in a designated record set for so long as we maintain this information. In certain cases, we may deny your request for an amendment. If we deny your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us and we may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and will provide you with a copy of any such rebuttal. Please contact our Privacy Officer if you have questions about amending your medical record.

**You have the right to receive an accounting of certain disclosures we have made, if any, of your protected health information.**

This right applies to disclosures for purposes other than treatment, payment or health care operations as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices. It excludes disclosures we may have made to you if you authorized us to make the disclosure, for a facility directory, to family members or friends involved in your care, or for notification purposes, for national security or intelligence, to law enforcement (as provided in the privacy rule) or correctional facilities, as part of a limited data set disclosure. The right to receive this information is subject to certain exceptions, restrictions and limitations.

**You have the right to obtain a paper copy of this notice from us,** upon request, even if you have agreed to accept this notice electronically.

**3. COMPLAINTS**

You may complain to us or to the Secretary of Health and Human Services if you believe your privacy rights have been violated by us. You may file a complaint with us by notifying our Privacy Officer of your complaint. We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

You may contact our Privacy Officer, **Aretha R. Jones, MPH, MALPS** at **(912) 495-8887, ext. 6701** or [ajones@jclewishealth.org](mailto:ajones@jclewishealth.org) for further information about the complaint process.