

**THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW YOUR MEDICAL AND DENTAL INFORMATION MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY. THIS NOTICE IS EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 2003.**

Dental Health Services is devoted to protecting your privacy and the confidentiality of your dental, medical, and personal health information that we may obtain or to which we have access. We do not sell our client information. Your personal information will not be disclosed to nonaffiliated third parties, unless permitted or required by law, or authorized in writing by you.

Throughout this Notice, unless otherwise stated, your medical and dental health information refers to only health information created or received by Dental Health Services and identified in this Notice as **Protected Health Information (PHI)**. Please note that your dentist maintains your dental records, including payments and charges. Dental Health Services will have a record of this portion of your PHI only in special or exceptional circumstances.

Dental Health Services' privacy policies describe who has access to your PHI within the organization, how it will be used, when your PHI may be disclosed, safeguards to protect the privacy of your PHI and the training we provide our employees regarding maintaining and protecting your privacy.

**Under what circumstances must Dental Health Services share my PHI?**

Dental Health Services is required to disclose your PHI to you, and to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) when it is conducting an investigation of compliance with legal requirements. Dental Health Services is also required to disclose your PHI, subject to certain requirements and limitations, if the disclosure is compelled by (any of the following):

- a court order;
- a board, commission or administrative agency pursuant to its lawful authority;
- a party to a proceeding pursuant to a subpoena, subpoena duces tecum, or other authorized discovery in a proceeding before a court or an administrative agency;
- an arbitrator or panel of arbitrators in a lawfully-requested arbitration;
- a search warrant;
- a coroner in the course of an investigation; or
- by other law.

**When may Dental Health Services disclose my PHI without my authorization?**

Dental Health Services is permitted by law to use and disclose your PHI, without your authorization, for purposes of payment and health care administration.

- Payment purposes include activities to collect premiums and to determine or maintain coverage. These include using PHI in billing and collecting premiums, and related data processing including how your dentist obtains pre-authorization for certain dental services. For example, Dental Health Services periodically conducts quality assurance inspections of your dentist's office and during such visits may review your dental records as part of this audit.
- Health Care Administration means basic activities essential to Dental Health Services' function as a licensed Health Care Service Plan, and includes reviewing the qualifications and competence of your dentist; evaluating the quality of his/her services; providing subscriber services and information including answering enrollee inquiries but without disclosing PHI. Dental Health Services may, for example, review your dentist's records to determine if the copayments being charged by the office comply with the contract under which you receive dental coverage.
- In addition, Dental Health Services is permitted to use and disclose your PHI, without your authorization, in a variety of other situations, each subject to limitations imposed by law. These situations include, but are not limited to, the following uses and disclosures:
  - public health activities;
  - concerning victims of abuse, neglect or domestic violence;
  - health oversight agency;
  - judicial and administrative proceedings including the defense by Dental Health Services of a legal action or proceeding brought by you;
  - law enforcement purposes, subject to subpoena or law;
  - Workers' Compensation purposes;
  - parents or guardians of a minor; and
  - persons or entities who perform services on behalf of Dental Health Services and from whom Dental Health Services has received contractual assurances to protect the privacy of your PHI.

**Is Dental Health Services ever required to get my permission before sharing my PHI?**

Uses and disclosures of PHI other than those required or permitted by law will be made by Dental Health Services only with your written authorization. You may revoke any authorization given to Dental Health Services at any time by written notice of revocation to Dental Health Services, except to the extent that Dental Health Services has relied on the authorization before receiving your written revocation. **Uses and disclosures beyond those required or permitted by law, or authorized by you, are prohibited.**

**Does my employer have the right to access my PHI?**

If you are an enrollee under a plan sponsored by your employer, Dental Health Services will not disclose PHI to your employer except under the following conditions:

- you sign an authorization for release of your medical/dental information, or
- health care services were provided with specific prior written request and expense of the employer, and are relevant in a grievance, arbitration or lawsuit, or describe limitations entitling you to leave from work or limit work performance.

Any such disclosure is subject to Dental Health Services' "*minimum necessary*" disclosures policy.

**What is Dental Health Services' "Minimum Necessary" Policy?**

Dental Health Services uses reasonable efforts to limit the use and disclosure of your PHI to the minimum necessary to accomplish the purpose of the use or disclosure. This restriction includes requests for PHI from another entity, and to requests made by Dental Health Services to other entities. This restriction does not apply to requests by:

- your dentist for treatment purposes;
- you; or
- disclosures covered by an authorization you provided to another entity.

**What are my rights regarding the privacy of my PHI?**

Your rights respecting your PHI, and how you may exercise these rights are summarized here.

- You may request Dental Health Services to restrict uses and disclosures of your PHI in the performance of its payment or health care operations. However, a written request is required. Your health is the top priority and Dental Health Services is not required to agree to your requested restriction. If Dental Health Services agrees to your requested restriction, the restriction will not apply in situations involving emergency treatment by a health care provider.
- Dental Health Services will comply with your reasonable requests that you wish to receive communications of your PHI by alternative means or at alternative locations. Such requests must be made to Dental Health Services in writing.
- You have a right, subject to certain limitations, to inspect and copy your PHI. Your request must be made in writing. Dental Health Services will act on such request within 30 days of receipt of the request.
- You have the right to amend your PHI. The request to amend must be made in writing, and must contain the reason you wish to amend your PHI. Dental Health Services has the right to deny such requests under certain conditions provided by law. Dental Health Services will respond to your request within 60 days of receipt of the request and, in certain circumstances may extend this period for up to an additional 30 days.
- You have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of your PHI made by Dental Health Services for up to 6 years preceding such request subject to certain exceptions provided by law. These exceptions include, but are not limited to:
  - disclosures made for payment or health care operations purposes, and
  - disclosures occurring prior to February 26, 2002

Your request must be made in writing. Dental Health Services will provide the accounting within 60 days of your request but may extend the period for up to an additional 30 days. The first accounting requested during any 12-month period will be made without charge. There is a \$25 charge for each additional accounting requested during such 12-month period. You may withdraw or modify any additional requests within 30 days of the initial request in order to avoid or reduce the fee.

- You have the right to receive a copy of this Notice, and any amended Notice, upon written or telephone request made to Dental Health Services.
- All written requests for the purposes described in this section, and all other written communications to Dental Health Services desired or required by this Notice, must be delivered to Dental Health Services, 936 N. 34th St., Suite 208, Seattle, WA 98103 by any of the following means:
  - personal delivery;
  - email delivery to [customercare@dentalhealthservices.com](mailto:customercare@dentalhealthservices.com);
  - first class or certified U.S. Mail; or
  - overnight or courier delivery, charges prepaid

**What duties does Dental Health Services agree to perform?**

- Dental Health Services will maintain the privacy of your PHI and provide you with notice of its legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- Dental Health Services will abide by the terms of this Notice and any revised Notice, during the period that it is in effect.
- Dental Health Services reserves the right to change the terms of this Notice or any revised notice. Any new terms shall be effective for all PHI that it maintains including PHI created or received by Dental Health Services prior to the effective date of the new terms. Each time Dental Health Services makes a revised Notice, it shall 1) post it on its website, [www.dentalhealthservices.com](http://www.dentalhealthservices.com) and 2) distribute a written copy personally by First Class U.S. Mail to each of its subscribers who are enrolled with Dental Health Services during the period that such revised Notice remains effective.

**What if I am dissatisfied with Dental Health Services' compliance with HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) privacy regulations?**

You have the right to express your dissatisfaction or objection to Dental Health Services and to the Secretary of HHS if you believe your privacy rights have been violated. Grievances to Dental Health Services must be made in writing to Dental Health Services, 936 N. 34th St., Suite 208, Seattle, WA 98103 Attn: Privacy Officer. Your written dissatisfaction must describe the acts or omissions you believe to be in violation of the provisions of this Notice or applicable laws. Your written objection to HHS or Dental Health Services must be filed within 180 days of when you knew or should have known of the act or omission. You will not be penalized or retaliated against for communicating your dissatisfaction. We are eager to assist you.

**Who should I contact if I have any questions regarding my privacy rights with Dental Health Services?**

You may obtain further information regarding your PHI privacy rights by contacting your Dental Health Services' Member Service Specialist at 800.637.6453 (800.63.SMILE) during regular office hours or at [www.dentalhealthservices.com](http://www.dentalhealthservices.com).