

# HIPAA PRIVACY

**Privacy Statement**  
**Tuolumne Me-Wuk Indian Health Center, Inc.**

18880 Cherry Valley Blvd  
Tuolumne, CA 95379  
Phone: (209) 928-5400

**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.**

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact our office at above address and/or phone number.

## **WHO WILL FOLLOW THIS NOTICE?**

This notice describes our Health Center's practices and that of:

- Any health care professional authorized to enter information into your Health Center chart.
- All employees, staff and other Health Center personnel.

## **OUR PLEDGE REGARDING MEDICAL INFORMATION:**

We understand that medical information about you and your health is personal. We are committed to protecting medical information about you. We create a record of the care and services you receive at the Health Center. 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 the Health Center, whether made by Health Center personnel or your personal doctor.

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

We are required by law to make sure that medical information that identifies you is kept private; give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to medical information about you; and follow the terms of the notice that is currently in effect.

## **HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:**

The following categories describe different ways that we use and disclose medical information. For each category of uses or disclosures we will explain what we mean and try to give some examples. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed. However, all of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of the categories.

For Treatment. We may use medical information about you to provide you with medical treatment or services. We may disclose medical information about you to doctors, nurses, technicians, medical students, or other Health Center personnel who are involved in taking care of you. For example, a doctor treating you for a broken leg may need to know if you have diabetes because diabetes may slow the healing process. In addition, the doctor may need to tell the orthopedist if you have diabetes so that we can arrange for medications and treatments. Different departments of the Health Center also may share medical information about you in order to coordinate the different things you need, such as prescriptions, lab work and x-rays. We also may disclose medical information about you to people outside the Health Center who may be involved in your medical care after you leave the Health Center, such as Home Care, family members, hospitals or others we use to provide services that are part of your care.

For Payment. We may use and disclose medical information about you so that the treatment and services you receive at the Health Center may be billed to and payment may be collected from you, an insurance

company or a third party. For example, we may need to give your health plan information about tests performed on you at the Health Center so your health plan will pay us or reimburse you for the tests. We may also tell your health plan about a treatment you are going to receive to obtain prior approval or to determine whether your plan will cover the treatment. We may use and disclose medical information about you to other health care professionals involved in your care for to enable these professionals to obtain payment for the services they have provided to you.

For Health Care Operations. We may use and disclose medical information about you for Health Center operations. These uses and disclosures are necessary to run the Health Center and make sure that all of our patients receive quality care. For example, we may use medical information to review our treatment and services and to evaluate the performance of our staff in caring for you. We may also combine medical information about many Health Center patients to decide what additional services the Health Center should offer, what services are not needed, and whether certain new treatments are effective. We may also disclose information to doctors, nurses, technicians, medical student and other Health Center personnel for review and learning purposes. We may also combine our medical information with medical information from other Health Centers to compare how we are doing and see where we can make improvements in the care and services we offer. We may remove information that identifies you for this set of medical information so others may use it to study health care and health care delivery without learning who the specific patients are.

Appointment Reminders. We may use and disclose medical information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment for treatment or medical care at the Health Center.

Treatment Alternatives. We may use and disclose medical information to tell you about or recommend possible treatment options or alternatives that may be of interest to you.

Health-Related Benefits and Services. We may use and disclose medical information to tell you about health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

Individuals Identified as You as Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care. We may release directly relevant medical information about you to a friend or family member who is involved in your medical care. We may also give information to someone who helps pay for your care. Unless there is a specific written request from you to the contrary, we may also tell your family or friends your condition. In addition, we may disclose medical information about you to an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort so that your family can be notified about your condition, status and location.

Research. Under certain circumstances, we may use and disclose medical information about you for research purposes. For example, a research project may involve comparing the health and recovery of all patients who receive one medication to those who receive another, for the same condition. All research projects, however, are subject to a special approval process. This process evaluates a proposed research project and its use of medical information, trying to balance the research needs with patients' need for privacy of their medical information. Before we use or disclose medical information for research, the project will have been approved through this research approval process, but we may, however, disclose medical information about you to people preparing to conduct a research project, for example, to help them look for patients with specific medical needs, so long as the medical information they review does not leave the Health Center. We will almost always ask for your specific permission if the researcher will have access to your name, address or other information that reveals who you are, or will be involved in your care at the Health Center.

As Required By Law. We will disclose medical information about you when required to do so by federal, state or local law. This includes but is not limited to information about cancer diagnoses and treatment to the State Cancer Registry who may contact you regarding a cancer diagnosis or a request to participate in a research study that has been identified as beneficial to Public Health Purposes, reporting of certain diseases to the Department of Health Services, certain birth defects to the California Birth Defects Program.

To Advert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety. We may use and disclose medical information about you when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of the public or another person. Any disclosure, however, would only be to someone able to help prevent the threat.

## **SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

Organ and Tissue Donation. If you are an organ donor, we may release medical information to organizations that handle organ procurement or organ, eye or tissue transplantation or to 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 release medical information about you as required by military command authorities. We may also release medical information about foreign military personnel to the appropriate foreign military authority.

Workers' Compensation. We may release medical information about you for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

Public Health Risks. We may disclose medical information about you for public health activities. These activities generally include the following: to prevent or control disease, injury or disability; to report births and deaths; to report the abuse or neglect of children, elders and dependent adults; to report reactions to medications or problems with products; 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 for spreading a disease or condition; to notify the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence. We will only make this disclosure if you agree or when required or authorized by law.

Health Oversight Activities. We may disclose medical information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, 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 disclose medical information about you in response to a court or administrative order. We may also disclose medical information about you in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request (which may include written notice to you) or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.

Law Enforcement. We may release medical information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official: In response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons or similar process; To identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person; About the victim of a crime if, under certain limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement; About a death we believe may be the result of criminal conduct; About criminal conduct at the Health Center; and 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 Directors. We may release medical information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death. We may also release medical information about patients of the Health Center to funeral directors as necessary to carry out their duties.

National Security and Intelligence Activities. We may release medical information about you to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law.

Protective Services for the President and Others. We may disclose medical information about you to authorized federal officials so they may provide protection to the President, other authorized persons or foreign heads of state or conduct special investigations.

Inmates. If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement official, we may release medical information about you to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be necessary (1) for the institution to provide you with health care; (2) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of others; or (3) for the safety and security of the correctional institution.

## **YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU**

You have the following rights regarding medical information we maintain about you:

- **Right to Inspect and Copy.** You have the right to inspect and copy medical information that may be used to make decisions about your care. Usually, this includes medical and billing records, but may not include some mental health information.
- To inspect and copy medical information that may be used to make decisions about you, you must submit your request in writing to the Health Center. If you request a copy of the information, we may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing or other supplies associated with your request. A form for this purpose is available.
- We may deny your request to inspect and copy in certain very limited circumstances. If you are denied access to medical information, you may request that the denial be reviewed. Another licensed health care professional chosen by the Health Center will review your request and the denial. The person conducting the review will not be the person who denied your request. We will comply with the outcome of the review.
- **Right to Amend.** If you feel that medical information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for the Health Center. A form for this purpose is available.
- To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to the Health Center. In addition, you must provide a reason that supports your request.
- We may deny your request for an amendment if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support the request. In addition, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that was not created by us, unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment; Is not part of the medical information kept by or for the Health Center; Is not part of the information which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or Is accurate and complete.
- **Right to an Accounting of Disclosures.** You have the right to request an “accounting of disclosures.” This is a list of the disclosures we made of medical information about you other than our own uses for treatment, payment and health care operations, as those functions are described above.
- To request this list of accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to the Health Center. Your request must state a time period which may not be longer than six years and may not include dates before April 14, 2003. Your request should indicate in what form you want the list (for example, on paper, electronically). The first list you request within a 12-month period will be free. For additional lists, we may charge you for the costs of providing the list. We will notify you of the cost involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at that time before any costs are incurred. A form for this purpose is available.
- **Right to Request Confidential Communications.** You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you at work or by mail.
- To request confidential communications, you must make your request in writing to the Health Center. We will not ask you the reason for your request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted. A form for this purpose is available.
- **Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice.** You have the right to a paper copy of this notice. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. Even if you have agreed to receive this notice electronically, you are still entitled to a paper copy of this notice.
- To obtain a paper copy of this notice, you may request a copy in person at the Reception desk of the Health Center.

**CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE**

We reserve the right to change this notice. We reserve the right to make the revised or changed notice effective for medical 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 the Health Center. The notice will contain on the first page, in the top right-hand corner, the effective date.

**COMPLAINTS**

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with the Health Center or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with the Health Center, contact:

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| Tuolumne MeWuk Indian Health Center, Inc.<br>18880 Cherry Valley Blvd<br>Tuolumne, CA 95379<br>C/O: Compliance Officer<br>Voice: (209) 928-5425 | <b>OR</b> | OCR Regional Office<br>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services<br>90 7th Street, Suite 4-100<br>San Francisco, CA 94103<br>Voice: (800) 368-1019<br>Fax: (415) 437-8329 |
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All complaints must be submitted in writing. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.

**OTHER USES OF MEDICAL INFORMATION**

Other uses and disclosures of medical information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written permission. If you provide us permission to use or disclose medical information about you, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, we will no longer use or disclose medical information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you.