



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.

***If you have any questions about this Notice please contact our Privacy Officer, Roberto Conte.**

This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how we may use and disclose your protected health information 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 protected health information. "Protected health information" is information, including demographic information, that may identify you and that may relate to your past, present, or future physical or mental health or condition, and related health care services.

The privacy of Personal Health Information is extremely important to Eye Doctor's of Washington; and, in order to best protect this information, our practice is fully committed to complying with all 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.

1. USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

Your protected health information may be used and disclosed by your physician, 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 your physician's practice.

The following are examples of the types of uses and disclosures of your protected health information that your physician's office is 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 protected health information, as necessary, to a home health agency that provides care to you. We will also disclose protected health information to other physicians 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 protected health information from time-to-time to another physician or health care provider (*e.g.*, a specialist or laboratory) who, at the request of your physician, becomes involved in your care by providing assistance with your health care diagnosis or treatment to your physician.

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 surgical procedure may require that your relevant protected health information be disclosed to the health plan to obtain approval for the surgery. For the details on information release concerning specific insurance providers, please refer to the Eye Doctors of Washington’s *Financial Agreement*.

Health Care Operations: We may use or disclose, as needed, your protected health information in order to support the business activities of your physician’s practice. These activities include, but are not limited to, quality assessment 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) for our practice. 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 protected health information. The HIPAA provisions, set by the Department of Health and Human Services, require that our business associates must now follow the same policies stated in this Notice of Practice Privacy. To provide transparency for this measure, we have added, as an addendum, the HIPAA policies set forth by our external billing service, Doctor’s Choice Medical Services.

We may use or disclose your demographic information and the dates that you received treatment from your physician, as necessary, in order to contact you for fundraising activities supported by our office. If you do not want to receive these materials, please contact our Privacy Officer and request that these fundraising materials not be sent to you.

Network Sharing of Patient Information: Our practice utilizes a number of computer-based technologies. In order for these technologies to function properly, patient information must be shared via a practice-based network. To ensure the protection of this information and the full compliance of HIPAA provisions, our practice utilizes the proper, HIPAA compliant, encryptions. In the case of a network breach, our practice will follow HIPAA standards and policies for the notification of affected patients.



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 protected health information 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 law requires its use or disclosure. 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 the premises of our practice, and (6) medical emergency (not on our practice's 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, which has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your protected health information. The healthcare information or demographic information that Eye Doctors of Washington discloses for research purposes is always done in an anonymous manner.

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 physician created or received your protected health information in the course of providing care to you.

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

Other uses and disclosures of your protected health information 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.

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. Within Eye Doctor's of Washington's *Use and Disclosure of Protected Health Information* form, Eye Doctor's of Washington has provided the opportunity for patients to list individuals/ entities that the patient desires to grant authorization to view patient health information. 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.

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 physician and the practice uses 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.

Your physician is not required to agree to a restriction that you may request. If your physician does agree to the requested restriction, we may not use or disclose your protected health information 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 physician. You may request a restriction by filling out the *Restriction of Protected Health Care* form, located at the front desk.

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 other healthcare-based regulatory agencies 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, Roberto Conte at (301) 215-7100 or at rconte@edow.com, for further information about the complaint process.

The following is the contact information for a number of regulatory agencies:

➤ **MARYLAND REGULATORY AGENCY:**

Office of Health Care Quality
Spring Grove Hospital Center
Bland Bryant Building
55 Wade Avenue
Catonsville, Maryland 21228

To Download a Form go to: www.dhmh.state.md.us/ohcq/complaint/complaint.htm.

➤ **Health and Human Services:**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20201
Toll Free: 1-877-696-6775

To Download a Form, go to: <http://www.hhs.gov/ContactUs.html>

➤ **Sites for address and phone numbers of regulatory agencies:**

- Medicare Ombudsman website: www.medicare.gov/Ombudsman/resources.asp
 - Medicare: www.medicare.gov or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)
 - Office of the Inspector General: <http://oig.hhs.gov>
-