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Notice of Privacy Practices

Effective Date: August 1, 2005

We respect our legal obligation to keep health information that identifies you private. We are obligated by law to give you notice of our privacy practices. This Notice describes how we protect your health information and what rights you have regarding it.

The most common reason why we use or disclose your health information is for treatment, payment or health care operations. Examples of how we use or disclose information for treatment purposes are: setting up an appointment for you; testing or examining your eyes; prescribing glasses, contact lenses, or eye medications and faxing them to be filled; showing you low vision aids; referring you to another doctor or clinic for eye care or low vision aids or services; or getting copies of your health information from another professional that you may have seen before us. Examples of how we use or disclose your health information for payment purposes are: asking you about your health or vision plans, or other sources of payment; preparing and sending bills or claims; and collecting unpaid amounts (either ourselves or through a collection agency or attorney). "Health care operations" mean those administrative and managerial functions that we have to do in order to run our office. Examples of how we use or disclose your health information for health care operations are: financial or billing audits; internal quality assurance; personnel decisions; participation in managed care plans; defense of legal matters; business planning; and outside storage of our records. We routinely use your health information inside our office for these purposes without any special permission. If we need to disclose your health information outside of our office for these reasons, we usually will not ask you for special written permission.

In some limited situations, the law allows or requires us to use or disclose your health information without your permission. Not all of these situations will apply to us; some may never come up at our office at all. Such uses or disclosures are: when a state or federal law mandates that certain health information be reported for a specific purpose; for public health purposes, such as contagious disease reporting, investigation or surveillance; notices to and from the Federal Food and Drug Administration regarding drugs or medical devices; disclosures to governmental authorities about victims of suspected abuse, neglect or domestic violence; uses and disclosures for health oversight activities, such as for the licensing of doctors; for audits by Medicare or Medicaid; for investigation of possible violations of health care laws; disclosures for judicial and administrative proceedings, such as in response to subpoenas or orders of courts or administrative agencies; victim of crime; to provide information about a crime at our office; to report a crime that happened somewhere else; disclosure to a medical examiner to identify a dead person or to determine the cause of death; to funeral directors to aid in burial; or to organizations that handle organ or tissue donations; uses or disclosures for specialized government functions, such as for the protection of the President or high ranking government officials; for lawful national intelligence activities; for military purposes; for evaluation and health of members of the foreign service; disclosure of de-identified information; disclosures relating to worker's compensation programs; disclosures of a "limited data set" for research, public health, or health care operation; incidental disclosures that are unavoidable by-product of permitted uses or disclosures; disclosures to "business associates" who perform health care operations for us and who commit to respect the privacy of your health information.

Unless you object we will also share relevant information about your care with your family or friends who are helping you with your eye care.

We may call or write to remind you of scheduled appointments or that it is time to make a routine appointment. We may also call or write to notify you of other treatments or services available at our office that might help you.

We will not make any other uses or disclosures of your health information unless you sign a written "authorization form." The content of the "authorization form" is determined by federal law. Sometimes we may initiate the authorization process if the use of disclosure is our idea. Sometimes you may initiate the process if it's your idea for us to send your information to someone else. Typically in this situation you will need to give us a properly completed authorization form or you can use one of ours.

If we initiate the process and ask you to sign an authorization form you do not have to sign it. If you do not sign the authorization we cannot make the use or disclosure. If you do sign one you may revoke it at any time unless we have already acted in reliance upon it. Revocations must be in writing, send them to the office contact person named at the beginning of this notice.

The law gives you many rights regarding your health information. You can:

Ask us to restrict our uses and disclosures for the purposes of treatment (except emergency treatment), payment, or health care operations. We do not have to agree to do this, but if we agree, we must honor the restrictions that you want. To ask for a restriction send a written request to the office contact person at the address or fax shown at the beginning of this notice.

Ask us to communicate with you in a confidential way such as phoning you at work rather than at home or by mailing health information to a different address. We will accommodate these requests if they are reasonable and if you pay us for the extra cost. If you want to ask for confidential communications send a written request to the office contact person at the address or fax shown at the beginning of this notice.

Ask to see or to get photocopies of your health information. By law there are a few limited situations in which we can refuse to permit access to copying. For the most part, however, you will be able to review or have a copy of your health information within 30 days of

asking (or 60 days if the information is stored off-site). You may have to pay for photocopies in advance. If we deny your request we will send you a written explanation and instructions about how to get an impartial review of our denial if one is legally available. By law we can have one 30 day extension of the time for us to give you access or photocopies if we send you a written notice of the extension. If you want to review or get photocopies of your health information send a written request to the office contact person at the address or fax shown at the beginning of this notice.

Ask us to amend your health information if you think that it is incorrect or incomplete. If we agree we will amend the information within 60 days from when you ask us. We will send the corrected information to persons who we know got the wrong information and others that you specify. If we do not agree you can write a statement of your position and we will include it with your health information along with any rebuttal statement that we may write. Once your statement of position and/or rebuttal is included in your health information, we will send it along whenever we make a permitted disclosure of your health information. By law we can have one 30 day extension of time to consider a request for amendment if we notify you in writing of the extension. If you want to ask us to amend your health information, send a written request, including your reasons for the amendment to the office contact person at the address or fax shown at the beginning of this notice.

Get a list of the disclosures that we have made of your health information within the past six years (or a shorter period if you want.) By law, the list will not include: disclosures for purposes of treatment, payment or health care operations; disclosures with your authorization; incidental disclosures; disclosures required by law; and some other limited disclosures. You are entitled to one such list per year without charge. If you want more frequent lists, you will have to pay for them in advance. We will usually respond to your request within 60 days of receiving it, but by law we can have one 30 day extension of time if we notify you of the extension in writing. If you want a list, send a written request to the office contact person at the address or fax shown at the beginning of this notice.

Get additional paper copies of this Notice of Privacy Practices upon request. It does not matter whether you got one electronically or in paper form already. If you want additional paper copies, send a written request to the office contact person at the address or fax shown at the beginning of this notice.

By law, we must abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices until we choose to change it. We reserve the right to change this notice at any time as allowed by law. If we change this Notice, the new privacy practices will apply to your health information that we already have as well as to such information that we may generate in the future. If we change our Notice of Privacy Practices, we will post the new notice in our office and have copies available in our office.

If you think that we have not properly respected the privacy of your health information, you are free to complain to us or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights. We will not retaliate against you if you make a complaints. If you want to complain to us, send a written complaint to the office contact person at the address or fax shown at the beginning of this notice. If you prefer, call or visit the office at the address or phone number shown at the beginning of this notice.