



VET COMP & PEN
★ MEDICAL CONSULTING ★



Notice of Privacy Practices

Your Information
Your Rights
Our Responsibilities

August 4th 2020

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Introduction:

Notice of Privacy Practices

Your Information. Your Rights. Our Responsibilities.

Under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), and other federal laws and regulations, Vet Comp and Pen Medical Consulting, LLC, is required to maintain the privacy of health information that identifies you, called protected health information (PHI), and to provide you with notice of our legal duties and privacy policies regarding PHI. We also must train our personnel to protect your privacy, which includes a sanction policy to discipline employees who breach your privacy and confidentiality or fail to uphold our privacy policies and standards. We must also take action to mitigate any breach of your privacy or confidentiality. Vet Comp and Pen Medical Consulting, LLC, is committed to the protection of your PHI and will make reasonable efforts to ensure the confidentiality of your PHI, as required by statute and regulation. We take this commitment seriously. We will not use or disclose your PHI without your consent or authorization except as described in this Notice or otherwise required by law. We will work with you to comply with your right to receive certain information under HIPAA.

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.



When it Comes to Your Health Information, You Have Certain Rights

This section explains your rights and some of our responsibilities to help you.

1. Get a copy of your paper or electronic medical record. You can ask to see or get an electronic or paper copy of your medical record and other health information we have about you by:

- Calling our Privacy Officer, Jennifer Avery at (888) 988-3837 or e-mailing her at jennifer.avery@vetcompandpen.com.

We will provide a copy or a summary of your health information, within 30 days of your request. We may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee. If we deny your request, we will explain the reasons and your right to seek review.

2. Ask us to correct your paper or electronic medical record (Amendment and Correction).

- You can ask us to correct health information about you that you think is incorrect or incomplete.
- We do not have to grant the request if we did not create the record.
- We may say “no” to your request, such as where the record is accurate and complete, but we’ll tell you why in writing within 60 days.

3. Request Confidential Communications (Communication by Alternate Means).

- Regulations require encrypted messaging systems for confidential communications. Since our e-mail communications are not encrypted, it is the policy of Vet Comp and Pen Medical Consulting, LLC, not to use e-mail for sharing confidential information unless you make a specific request for us to do so. For e-mail communications you address to us, please keep in mind that communications via e-mail are not secure. Although it is unlikely, there is a possibility that information you include in an e-mail can be intercepted and read by other parties besides the person to whom it is addressed.
- You can ask us to contact you in a specific way (for example, home or office phone) or to send mail to a different address.
- We will say “yes” to all reasonable requests.

4. Ask us to limit what we use or share (Request Restrictions).

- You can ask us **not** to use or share certain health information for consulting services, payment, or our operations. We are not required to agree to your request, and we may say “no” if it would affect consulting objectives.
- If you pay for medical consulting services out-of-pocket in full, you can ask us not to share information. We will say “yes” unless the law requires us to share that information.
- Your revocation of consent or authorization to use or disclose your PHI will not apply to PHI we have already released under your prior consent or authorization.

5. Get a list of those with whom we have shared information (Accounting and Disclosures).

- You can ask for a list of the times we have shared your health information for six years prior to the date you ask, who we shared it with, and why.
- We will include all the disclosures consistent with law and regulation within 60 days of request. We’ll provide one accounting a year for free but will charge a reasonable, cost-based fee if you ask for another one within 12 months.



6. Get a copy of this privacy notice.

- You can ask for a paper copy of this notice, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically. We will provide you with a paper copy promptly.

7. Choose someone to act for you.

- We can share information about you with someone you approve, such as a spouse, relative, or friend. Please contact the Privacy Officer, Jennifer Avery, at (888) 988-3837 or e-mail her at jennifer.avery@vetcompandpen.com, for specific steps which require your authorization and selection of a unique code.

8. File a complaint if you feel your rights are violated.

- You can complain if you feel we have violated your rights by contacting our designated HIPAA Complaint Officer, Alli Nevins at (888) 988-3837 or by e-mail at Alli.Nevins@vetcompandpen.com.
- You can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights by sending a letter to: 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201, calling (877) 696-6775, or visiting <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/html>
- We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

Your Choices About What We Share

For certain health information, you can tell us your choices about what we share.

If you have a clear preference for how we share your information in the situations described below, talk to us. Tell us what you want us to do, and we will follow your instructions.

In these cases, you have both the right and choice to tell us to:

- Share your information with your family, close friends, or others involved in your care.
- Share information in a disaster relief situation.

If you are not able to tell us your preference, we may go ahead and share your information if we believe it is in your best interest. We may also share your information when needed to lessen a serious and imminent threat to health or safety.

We will not share any identifying information in the following ways unless you give us written permission:

- Sale of your information.
- Sharing of psychotherapy notes (unless required by a court order or requested by a government entity).

Our Uses and Disclosures **Without** Authorization

We may use and/or disclose your information for many different reasons. In certain situations, which are described within this notice, your written authorization must be obtained in order to use and/or disclose your PHI. However, your written authorization is not required for the following uses and/or disclosures by Vet Comp and Pen Medical Consulting, LLC, for payment or medical consulting.

We typically use or share your health information in the following ways:

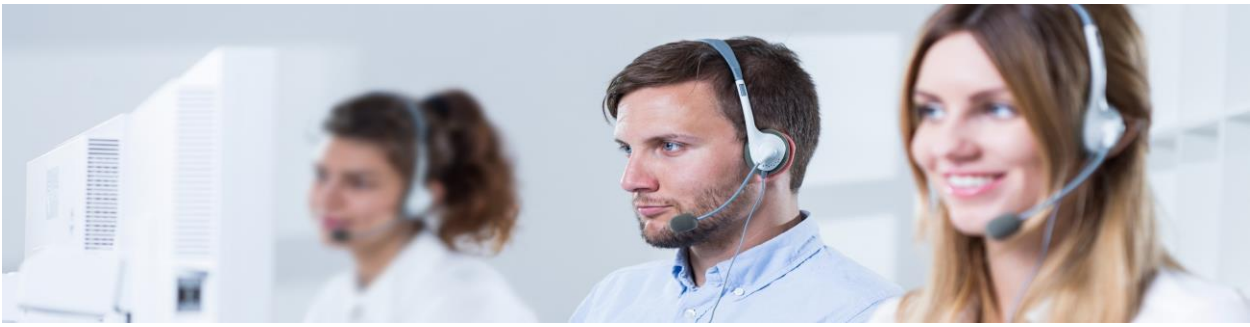
To Provide Consulting Services

We can use your health information and share it with other employees who are performing activities in support of the medical consultation. *Example: A person on the medical records review team assigned to your case sees mention of a health condition and consults with a licensed Physician Assistant on our staff regarding the notation.*



To Run Our Organization (Medical Consulting Operations)

We can use and share your health information to run our business, improve your consulting experience, and contact you when necessary. *Example: We use information about you to see how quickly your claim was processed in comparison with others.*



Marketing

We may contact you to provide information about services that may meet your consulting objectives or be of interest to you. If we contact you to provide marketing information for products or services, you have the right to opt out of receiving such communications. Contact Jennifer Avery, the Privacy Officer, at (888) 988-3837 or e-mail her at jennifer.avery@vetcompandpen.com, to opt out. If we receive compensation from another entity for the marketing, we must obtain your signed authorization. *Example: Vet Comp and Pen identifies a medical condition that is part of a class action lawsuit occurring outside of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and provides the client with information about additional compensation opportunities in addition to VA disability compensation.*

Business Associates

We provide some services through contracts with business associates. Examples include certain diagnostic tests, medical records review services, customer service representatives, and the like. When we use these services, we may disclose your health information to the business associates so that they can perform the function(s) that we have contracted with them to do. To protect your health information, however, we require the business associates to appropriately safeguard your information. After February 17, 2010, business associates must comply with the same federal security and privacy rules as we do.

Communication With Family

Unless you object, we, as health professionals, using our best judgment, may disclose to a family member, a close personal friend, or any other person that you identify health information relevant to that person's involvement in your case or payment related to your case. *Example: While a client is recovering for surgery, employees provide his wife with a claim status update.*

The Federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

Under privacy standards, we must disclose your health information to DHHS as necessary to in compliance with its standards. *Example: A hacker unlawfully gains access to client records and our Privacy Officer reports this breach to DHHS.*

To Bill for Our Services (Payment Purposes)

We can use and share your health information to bill and get payment from you for medical consulting services we have provided. *Example: We give information about you to a collection agency after nonpayment.*

How else can we use or share your health information?

We are allowed or required to share your information in other ways that do not require authorization (except with respect to certain highly confidential information described within). We have to meet many conditions in the law before we can share your information for these purposes.

For more information see:

www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/understanding/consumers/index.html

Help with Public Health and Safety Issues

We can share health information about you for certain situations, such as:

- Reporting suspected abuse, neglect, or domestic violence.
- Preventing or reducing a serious threat to anyone's health or safety.

Comply with the Law

We will share information about you if local, state or federal laws require it, including the Department of Health and Human Services if it wants to see that we're complying with federal privacy laws.

Address workers' compensation, law enforcement, and other government requests

We can use or share health information about you

- For workers' compensation claims;
- For law enforcement purposes or with a law enforcement official;
- With health oversight agencies for activities authorized by law;
- For special government functions such as military, national security; and presidential protective services.

Respond to Lawsuits and Legal Actions

We can share health information about you in response to a court or administrative order, or in response to a subpoena.

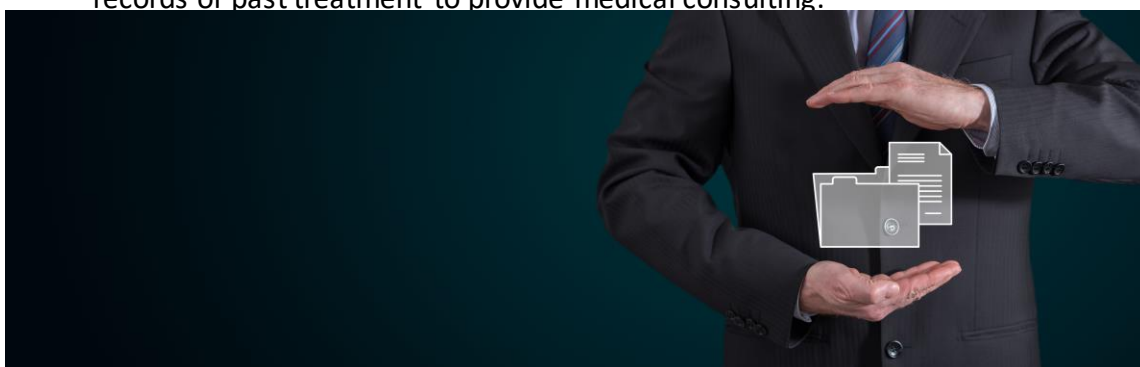
Uses and Disclosures **With** Written Authorization

We must ask for your written authorization for any other use and/or disclosure of your PHI which was not described above. If you authorize us to use and/or disclose your PHI, you can later revoke that authorization and stop any future use or disclosure of your PHI under that prior authorization. You can revoke an authorization by providing a written request of such revocation to the Privacy Officer, Jennifer Avery, at (888) 988-3837 or e-mailing her at jennifer.avery@vetcompandpen.com.

Highly Confidential Information

Even though Vet Comp and Pen Medical Consulting, LLC, does not treat patients, we routinely obtain large medical files that may contain all categories of medical information from prior treatment. Certain state and federal laws require special privacy protections for certain highly confidential information about you, including the subset of your PHI that: (i) is maintained in psychotherapy notes; (ii) is about services for mental health treatment; (iii) is about services for alcohol or drug abuse or addiction by substance use programs; or (iv) involves genetic information or information about Sickle Cell Anemia, HIV/AIDS, or sexually transmitted diseases (“Highly Confidential Information”). We must generally get your authorization to disclose any Highly Confidential Information about you, but may disclose it without first getting authorization in the following circumstances:

- 1. Psychotherapy notes.** In general, we will not use or disclose information recorded by a mental health professional to document or analyze conversations with you in therapy, unless you authorize us to do so. However, we can use or disclose such PHI without your authorization for the following purposes.
 - (a) A mental health or medical specialist on our staff may use those mental health records of past treatment to provide medical consulting.



- (b) In limited situations, we can use or disclose such PHI in connection with mental health training that occurs at one of our facilities.
- (c) We can use or disclose PHI to comply with law, public health, health oversight, or to avoid harm.

2. Mental Health Treatment. Information regarding your mental health treatment may be used by or disclosed to those whom you have authorized, including healthcare providers. Information regarding your mental health treatment may be disclosed when ordered by a court or otherwise required by law, such as reporting suspected child abuse or reports to the department of health or other regulatory agencies. We may also use or disclose mental health treatment information for purposes of program evaluation. In an emergency, information regarding your mental health treatment may be used or disclosed in order to prevent someone, (including you) from, being harmed.



3. Drug and alcohol treatment records. The confidentiality of alcohol and drug user related PHI which is maintained by the substance use and prevention programs is protected by federal law and regulations. In general, we may not tell a person outside the program that you attended the program, or disclose any information identifying you as an alcohol or drug user unless:

- (a) you consent in writing;
- (b) pursuant to an agreement with a business associate;
- (c) pursuant to medical consulting for a condition already disclosed or to be disclosed in support of a VA disability claim; and
- (d) as allowed by court order.

Federal laws and regulations do not protect any PHI about suspected child abuse or neglect from being reported under state law applicable to appropriate state or local authorities. (See 42 U.S.C. Sec. 290dd-3 and 42 U.S.C. Sec. 290ee-3 for Federal laws and 42 C.F.R. part 2 for Federal regulations).

- 4. HIV/AIDS-Related Information.** HIV/AIDS-related information, STD-related information, and Sickle Cell Anemia-related information are all subject to special protection. We will disclose such information to others who are not qualified to act as your personal representative without your written authorization only as permitted by law.

Our Responsibilities

We are required by law to:

- Maintain the privacy and security of your protected health information.
- Let you know promptly if a breach occurs that may have compromised the security of your information.
- Follow the duties and privacy practices described in this notice and give you a copy of it.
- Not use or share your information other than as described here unless you tell us we can in writing. If you tell us we can, you may change your mind at any time. Let us know in writing if you change your mind.

For more information see:

www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/understanding/consumers/noticepp.html

Changes to the Terms of this Notice

We can change the terms of this notice, and the changes will apply to all information we have about you. The new notice will be available upon request, in our office, and on our website.

If You Have Any Questions

Please feel free to call or email Vet Comp and Pen Medical Consulting, LLC, Privacy Officer, Jennifer Avery, at (888) 988-3837 or e-mail her at jennifer.avery@vetcompandpen.com.



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Who Are We?

We are an evidence-based medical consulting company with over 100 team members helping veterans win benefits they deserve.

We Work for You

You've fought for your country. Now it's time to have someone fighting for you.

We Help You

Our job is to help you get the benefits you medically and ethically deserve. We have a personalized process to do just that.