



Vision Care Center Notice of Privacy Practices

This notice of privacy practice describes how we may use or disclose your health information and how you can get access to such information. Please read it carefully.

Your “health information,” for purposes of this Notice, is generally any information that identifies you and is created, received, maintained, or transmitted by us in the course of providing health care items or services to you (referred to as “health information” in this Notice).

We are required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (“HIPAA”) and other applicable laws to maintain the privacy of your health information, to provide individuals with this Notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to such information, and to abide by the terms of this Notice. We are also required by law to notify affected individuals following a breach of their unsecured health information.

USES AND DISCLOSURES OF INFORMATION WITHOUT YOUR AUTHORIZATION

The most common reasons we would use or disclose your health information is for treatment, payment, or business operations. We routinely use and disclose your medical information within the office daily. We do not need specific permission to use or disclose your medical information in the following matters, although you have the right to request that we do not.

Examples of how we might use or disclose health information for treatment purposes might include:

Setting up or changing appointments including leaving messages with those at your home or office who may answer the phone or leaving messages on answering machines, voice mails or emails; calling your name out in a reception room environment; prescribing glasses, contact lenses, or medications as well as relaying this information to suppliers by phone, fax or other electronic means including initial prescriptions and requests from suppliers for refills; notifying you that your ophthalmic goods are ready, including leaving messages with those at your home or office who may answer the phone, or leaving messages on answering machines, voice mails or emails; referring you to another doctor for care not provided by this office; obtaining copies of health information from doctors you have seen before us; discussing your care with you directly or with family or friends you have inferred or agreed may listen to information about your health; sending you postcards or letters or leaving messages with those at your home who may answer the phone or on answering machines, voice mails or emails reminding you it is time for continued care.

Examples of how we might use or disclose health information for payment purposes might include:

Asking you about your vision or medical insurance plans or other sources of payment; preparing and sending bills to your insurance provider or to you; providing any information required by third party payers to insure payment for services rendered to you; collecting unpaid balances either ourselves or through a collection agency, attorney, or district attorney’s office. At the patient’s request, we may not

disclose health care information for services that you have paid for out of pocket. This only applies to those encounters related to the care you want restricted.

“Health care operations” mean those administrative and managerial functions that we must carry out to run our office. Examples of how we might use or disclose health information for health care operations might include:

Financial or billing audits; internal quality assurance programs; participation in managed care plans; personnel decisions; defense of legal matters; business planning; certain research functions; informing you of products or services offered by our office; compliance with local, state, or federal government agencies request for information; oversight activities such as licensing of our doctors; Medicare or Medicaid audits.

OTHER DISCLOSURES AND USES WE MAY MAKE WITHOUT YOUR AUTHORIZATION OR CONSENT

In some limited situations, the law allows or requires us to use or disclose your health information without your consent or authorization. Not all 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 reasons, such as reporting of a contagious disease, investigations or surveillance, and notices to and from the federal Food and Drug Administration regarding drugs or medical devices
- Disclosures to government or law authorities about victims of suspected abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or when someone is or suspected to be a victim of a crime
- Uses and disclosures for health oversight activities, such as for the licensing of doctors; for audits by Medicare or Medicaid; or 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
- Disclosures for law enforcement purposes, such as to provide information about someone who is or is suspected to be a victim of a crime; to provide information about a crime at our office; or to report a crime that happened somewhere else;
- Disclosures to a medical examiner to identify a deceased person or determine cause of death or to funeral directors to aid in burial; or to organizations that handle organ or tissue donations;
- Uses or disclosures for health-related research
- Uses or disclosures to prevent a serious threat to health or safety of an individual or individuals
- 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; or for the evaluation and health of members of the foreign service;
- Disclosures of de-identified information
- Disclosures related to worker’s compensation programs
- Disclosures of a “limited data set” for research, public health, or health care operations
- Incidental disclosures that are an unavoidable by-product of permitted uses and disclosures
- Disclosure of information needed in completing form from a school related vision screening, information to the Department of Public Safety, information related to certification for occupational or recreational licenses such as pilots license.

- Disclosures to “business associates” and their subcontractors who perform health care operations for Vision Care Center and who commit to respect the privacy of your health information in accordance with HIPAA

Unless you object, we will also share relevant information about your care with any of your personal representatives who are helping you with your eye care. Upon your death, we may disclose to your family members or to other persons who were involved in your care or payment for health care prior to your death (such as your personal representative) health information relevant to their involvement in your care unless doing so is inconsistent with your preferences as expressed to us prior to your death.

USES OR DISCLOSURES TO PATIENT REPRESENTATIVES

It is the policy of Vision Care Center for our staff to take phone calls from individuals on a patient’s behalf requesting information about making or changing an appointment; the status of eyeglasses, contact lenses, or other optical goods ordered by or for the patient. Vision Care Center staff will also assist individuals on a patient’s behalf in the delivery of eyeglasses, contact lenses, or other optical goods. During a telephone or in person contact, every effort will be made to limit the encounter to only the specifics needed to complete the transaction required. No information about the patient’s vision or health status may be disclosed without proper patient consent. Vision Care Center staff and doctors will also infer that if you allow another person in an examination or treatment room with you while testing is performed, or discussions held about your vision or health care that you consent to the presence of that individual.

SPECIFIC USES AND DISCLOSURES OF INFORMATION REQUIRING YOUR AUTHORIZATION

The following are some specific uses and disclosures we may not make of your health information without your authorization:

Marketing activities. We must obtain your authorization prior to using or disclosing any of your health information for marketing purposes unless such marketing communications take the form of face-to-face communications we may make with individuals or promotional gifts of nominal value that we may provide. If such marketing involves financial payment to us from a third party your authorization must also include consent to such payment.

Sale of health information. We do not currently sell or plan to sell your health information and we must seek your authorization prior to doing so.

Psychotherapy notes. Although we do not create or maintain psychotherapy notes on our patients, we are required to notify you that we generally must obtain your authorization prior to using or disclosing any such notes.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PROVIDE AN AUTHORIZATION FOR OTHER USES AND DISCLOSURES

- Other uses and disclosures of your health information that are not described in this Notice will be made only with your written authorization, the signing of a written Authorization for Release of Identifying Health Information.

- You may give Vision Care Center written authorization permitting us to use your health information or to disclose it to anyone for any purpose.

- We will obtain your written authorization for uses and disclosures of your health information that are not identified in this Notice or are not otherwise permitted by applicable law.
- We must agree to your request to restrict disclosure of your health information to a health plan if the disclosure is for the purpose of carrying out payment or health care operations and is not otherwise required by law and such information pertains solely to a health care item or service for which you have paid in full (or for which another person other than the health plan has paid in full on your behalf).

Any authorization you provide to us regarding the use and disclosure of your health information may be revoked by you in writing at any time. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your health information for the reasons described in the authorization. However, we are generally unable to retract any disclosures that we may have already made with your authorization. We may also be required to disclose health information as necessary for purposes of payment for services received by you prior to the date you revoked your authorization.

YOUR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

You have many rights concerning the confidentiality of your health information. You have the right:

- To request restrictions on the health information we may use and disclose for treatment (except in emergency care), payment and health care operations. We are not required to agree to these requests. To request restrictions, please send a written request to us at the address below.
- To receive confidential communications of health information about you in any manner other than described in our authorization request form. You must make such requests in writing to the address below. However, we reserve the right to determine if we will be able to continue your treatment under such restrictive authorizations.
- To inspect or copy your health information. You must make such requests in writing to the address below. If you request a copy of your health information, we may charge you a fee for the cost of copying, mailing or other supplies. Health care information you request may be delivered to you in electronic format. The e-formats supplied by Vision Care Center have been approved to be secure and protect the integrity of your health care information. Such e-formats include secure email and an authorized Electronic Health Information system and media. In certain circumstances we may deny your request to inspect or copy your health information, subject to applicable law.
- To amend health information. If you feel that health information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. To request an amendment, you must write to us at the address below. You must also give us a reason to support your request. We may deny your request to amend your health information if it is not in writing or does not provide a reason to support your request. We may also deny your request if the health information was not created by us; unless the person that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment; is not part of the health information kept by or for us; is not part of the information you would be permitted to inspect or copy; or is not accurate and complete.
- To receive an accounting of disclosures of your health information. You must make such requests in writing to the address below. Not all health information is subject to this request. Your request must state a time period for the information you would like to receive, no longer than 10 years prior to the date of your request. Your request must state how you would like to receive the report (paper, electronically). You are entitled to one such list per year without charge. If you want more frequent

lists, you must pay for them in advance at a fee of \$30.00 per list. We will usually respond to your written request within fifteen (15) days, but we are allowed one thirty (30) day extension if we need the time to complete your request.

- To designate another party to receive your health information. If your request for access of your health information directs us to transmit a copy of the health information directly to another person, the request must be made by you in writing to the address below and must clearly identify the designated recipient and where to send the copy of the health information.

You may obtain additional copies of this Notice of Privacy Practices from our office or online at our website address shown below.

www.VCC2020.com

Our contact person for all questions, requests or for further information related to the privacy of your health information is:

Dr. Roger Fitch, O.D.
4727 N. Sheridan Road, Peoria, IL 61614
Phone 309-670-2020
Fax 309-693-2536
info@vcc2020.com

Complaints:

If you think that anyone at Vision Care Center has not properly respected the privacy of your health information, you are free to complain to the practice Privacy Officer named above. If you want to complain to us, send a written complaint to the office contact person at the address, fax or E-mail shown above. If you prefer, you can discuss your complaint in person or by phone. We are more than happy to try and resolve any concerns you may have. If you feel your concern was not handled in a satisfactory way, you may then file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights or the Illinois Attorney General's Office. We will not retaliate against you if you make a complaint.

Changes to This Notice: We reserve the right to change our privacy practices and to apply the revised practices to health information about you that we already have. Any revision to our privacy practices will be described in a revised Notice that will be posted prominently in our facility.

Notice Revised and Effective: Jan 1, 2023