



HIPAA NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

I. 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.

II. It is our legal duty to safeguard your protected health information (PHI).

By law we are required to insure that your PHI is kept private. The PHI constitutes information created or noted by us that can be used to identify you. It contains data about your past, present, or future health or condition, the provision of health care services to you, or the payment for such health care. We are required to provide you with this notice about our privacy procedures. This notice must explain when, why, and how we would use and/or disclose your PHI. Use of PHI means when we share, apply, utilize, examine, or analyze information within our practice; PHI is disclosed when we release, transfer, give, or otherwise reveal it to a third party outside this practice. With some exceptions, we may not use or disclose more of your PHI than is necessary to accomplish the purpose for which the use or disclosure is made; however, we are always legally required to follow the privacy practices described in this notice.

Please note that we reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and our privacy policies at any time as permitted by law. Any changes will apply to PHI already on file with us. Before we make any important changes to our policies, we will immediately change this notice and post a new copy of it in our offices and on our Web site. You may also request a copy of this notice.

III. How we will use and disclose your PHI.

We may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and health care operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. An “*authorization*” is written permission above and beyond the general consent that permits only specific disclosures. In those instances when we are asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment and health care operations, we will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. We will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your psychotherapy notes.

“*Psychotherapy Notes*” are notes, we have made about our conversation during private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which we have kept separate from the rest of your medical record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI. In general, psychotherapy notes are not available to you or other individuals, even with your consent, as they contain your therapist’s personal observations and insights and are for the therapist’s own use in conducting therapy. In rare circumstances, your therapist may agree to release these notes to you or your representative with your signed consent.

You may revoke all such authorizations (of PHI or psychological notes) at any time, provided each revocation is in writing. You may not revoke an authorization to the extent that (1) we have relied on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage, and the law provides the insurer the right to consent the claim under the policy.

We will use and disclose your PHI for many different reasons. Some of the uses or disclosures will require your prior written authorization; others, however, will not. Below you will find the different categories of our uses and disclosures, with some examples.

A. Uses and Disclosures Related to Treatment, Payment, or Health Care Operations Do Not Require Your Prior Written Consent

We may use and disclose your PHI without your consent for the following reasons:

- 1. For treatment:** We can use your PHI within our practice to provide you with mental health treatment, including discussing or sharing your PHI with our trainees and interns. We may disclose your PHI to physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and other licensed health care providers who provide you with health care services or are otherwise involved in your care. Example: If a psychiatrist is treating you, we may disclose your PHI in order to coordinate your care.
- 2. For health care operations:** We may disclose your PHI to facilitate the efficient and correct operation of our practice. Examples: *Quality control*—We might use your PHI in the evaluation of the quality of health care services that you have received or to evaluate the performance of the health care professionals who provided you with these services. We may also provide your PHI to our attorneys, accountants, consultants, and others to make sure that we are in compliance with applicable laws.
- 3. To obtain payment for treatment:** We may use and disclose your PHI to bill and collect payment for the treatment and services provided to you. Example: We might send your PHI to your insurance company or health plan in order to get payment for the health care services that we have provided to you. We could also provide your PHI to business associates, such as billing companies, claims processing companies, and others that process health care claims for our office.
- 4. Other disclosures:** Examples: Your consent is **NOT** required if you need emergency treatment provided that we attempt to get your consent after treatment is rendered. In the event that we try to get your consent but you are unable to communicate with us (for example, if you are unconscious or in severe pain) but we think that you would consent to such treatment if you could, we may disclose your PHI.

B. Certain Other Uses and Disclosures Do Not Require Your Consent

We may use and/or disclose your PHI without your consent or authorization for the following reasons:

- 1. When disclosure is required by federal, state, or local law; judicial, board, or administrative proceedings; or law enforcement** Example: We may make a disclosure to the appropriate officials when a law requires us to report information to government agencies, law enforcement personnel, and/or in an administrative proceeding.
- 2. If disclosure is compelled by a party to a proceeding before a court of an administrative agency pursuant to its lawful authority.**
- 3. If disclosure is required by a search warrant lawfully issued to a governmental law enforcement agency.**
- 4. If disclosure is compelled by the patient or the patient's representative pursuant to health and safety codes or to corresponding federal statutes of regulations** (such as the privacy rule that requires this notice).
- 5. To avoid harm.** We may provide PHI to law enforcement personnel or persons able to prevent or mitigate a serious threat to the health or safety of a person or the public (i.e., adverse reaction to meds).
- 6. If disclosure is compelled or permitted by the fact that you are in such mental or emotional condition as to be dangerous to yourself or the person or property of others, and if we determine that disclosure is necessary to prevent the threatened danger.**
- 7. If disclosure is mandated by Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Laws.** For example, if we have a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect.
- 8. If disclosure is mandated by Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse Reporting Laws.** For example, if we have a reasonable suspicion of elder abuse or dependent adult abuse.

9. **If disclosure is compelled or permitted by the fact that you tell us of a serious/ imminent threat of physical violence by you against a reasonably identifiable victim or victims.**
10. **For public health activities.** Example: In the event of your death, if a disclosure is permitted or compelled, we may need to give the county coroner information about you.
11. **For health oversight activities.** Example: We may be required to provide information to assist the government in the course of an investigation or inspection of a health care organization or provider.
12. **For specific government functions.** Examples: We may disclose PHI of military personnel and veterans under certain circumstances. Also, we may disclose PHI in the interests of national security, such as protecting the president of the United States or assisting with intelligence operations.
13. **For research purposes.** In certain circumstances, we may provide PHI in order to conduct medical research.
14. **For Workers' Compensation purposes.** We may provide PHI in order to comply with Workers' Compensation laws.
15. **Appointment reminders and health-related benefits or services.** Examples: We may use PHI to provide appointment reminders. We may use PHI to give you information about alternative treatment options or other health care services or benefits we offer.
16. **If an arbitrator or arbitration panel compels disclosure;** when arbitration is lawfully requested by either party, pursuant to subpoena *duces tectum* (e.g., a subpoena for mental health records) or any other provision authorizing disclosure in a proceeding before an arbitrator or arbitration panel.
17. **If disclosure is required or permitted to a health oversight agency for oversight activities authorized by law.** Example: When compelled by U.S. Secretary of HHS to investigate or assess our compliance with HIPAA regulations.
18. **If disclosure is otherwise specifically required by law.**

C. Certain Uses and Disclosures Require You to Have the Opportunity to Object

We may provide your PHI to a family member, friend, or other individual who you indicate is involved in your care or responsible for the payment for your health care, unless you object in whole or in part. Retroactive consent may be obtained in emergency situations.

D. Other Uses and Disclosures Require Your Prior Written Authorization

In any other situation not described in Sections IIIA, IIIB, and IIIC above, we will request your written authorization before using or disclosing any of your PHI. Even if you have signed an authorization to disclose your PHI, you may later revoke that authorization, in writing, to stop any future uses and disclosures (assuming that we have not taken any action subsequent to the original authorization) of your PHI by us.

IV. The rights you have regarding your PHI

A. The Right to See and Get Copies of Your PHI.

In general, you have the right to see your PHI that is in our possession, or to get copies of it; however, you must request it in writing. If we do not have your PHI, but we know who does, we will advise you how you can get it. You will receive a response from us **within 30 days** of our receiving your written request. Under certain circumstances, we may feel we must deny your request, but if we do, we will give you, in writing, the reasons for the denial. We will also explain your right to have this denial reviewed.

If you ask for copies of your PHI, we will charge you not more than \$0.25 per page. We may see fit to provide you with a summary or explanation of the PHI, but only if you agree to it, as well as to the cost, in advance.

B. The Right to Request Limits on Uses and Disclosures of Your PHI

You have the right to ask that we limit how we use and disclose your PHI. While we will consider your request, we are not legally bound to agree. If we do agree to your request, we will put those limits in writing and abide by them *except in emergency situations*. **You do not have the right to limit the uses and disclosures that we are am legally required or permitted to make.**

C. The Right to Choose How We Send Your PHI to You

It is your right to ask that your PHI be sent to you at an alternate address (for example, sending information to your work address rather than your home address) or by an alternate method (for example, via e-mail instead of by regular mail). We are obliged to agree to your request providing that we can give you the PHI, in the format you requested, without undue inconvenience. We may not require an explanation from you as to the basis of your request as a condition of providing communications on a confidential basis.

D. The Right to Get a List of the Disclosures I Have Made

You are entitled to a list of disclosures of your PHI that we have made. *The list will not include uses or disclosures to which you have already consented, that is, those for treatment, payment, or health care operations, sent directly to you, or to your family; neither will the list include disclosures made for national security purposes, disclosures to corrections or law enforcement personnel, or disclosures made before April 15, 2003.* After April 15, 2003, disclosure records will be held for 6 years.

We will respond to your request for an accounting of disclosures **within 60 days** of receiving your request. The list we give you will include disclosures made in the previous 6 years (the first 6-year period being 2003–2009) unless you indicate a shorter period. The list will include the date of the disclosure, to whom PHI was disclosed (including their address, if known), a description of the information disclosed, and the reason for the disclosure. We will provide the list to you at no cost, unless you make more than 1 request in the same year, in which case we will charge you a reasonable sum based on a set fee for each additional request.

E. The Right to Amend Your PHI

If you believe that there is some error in your PHI or that important information has been omitted, it is your right to request that we correct the existing information or add the missing information. Your request and the reason for the request must be made in writing. You will receive a response **within 60 days** of our receipt of your request. We may deny your request, in writing, if we find that: the PHI is (a) correct and complete, (b) forbidden to be disclosed, (c) not part of our records, or (d) written by someone other than Caramenico Counseling Group, LLC. Our denial must be in writing and must state the reasons for the denial. It must also explain your right to file a written statement objecting to the denial. If you do not file a written objection, you still have the right to ask that your request and our denial be attached to any future disclosures of your PHI. If we approve your request, we will make the change(s) to your PHI. Additionally, we will tell you that the changes have been made, and we will advise all others who need to know about the change(s) to your PHI.

F. The Right to Get This Notice by E-mail

You have the right to get this notice by e-mail. You also have the right to request a paper copy of it.

V. How to file a complaint about Caramenico Counseling Group, LLC Privacy Practices

If, in your opinion, we may have violated your privacy rights, or if you object to a decision we made about access to your PHI, you are entitled to file a complaint with the person listed in Section VI below. You may also send a written complaint to the *Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services at 200 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201*. If you file a complaint about our privacy practices, we will take no retaliatory action against you.

VI. Person to contact for information about this notice or to complain about our privacy practices

If you have any questions about this notice or any complaints about our privacy practices, or would like to know how to file a complaint with the Secretary of the DHHS, please contact:

Jennifer Erb Caramenico, MA, Licensed Professional Counselor
800 W. State Street – Suite 303, Doylestown, PA 18901
Email: CaramenicoCounseling@gmail.com