



Notice of Privacy Practices

THIS NOTICE INVOLVES YOUR PRIVACY RIGHTS AND DESCRIBES HOW INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE DISCLOSED, AND HOW YOU CAN OBTAIN ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

Who We Are

This Notice applies to St. Clare Health Mission, including its clinic location, mobile clinic services, and visiting or volunteer healthcare providers who provide care through the clinic. St. Clare Health Mission provides integrated medical and behavioral health services and operates as a free clinic; patients and insurance companies are not billed for services.

Purpose of This Notice

This Notice of Privacy Practices explains how protected health information (PHI) may be used and disclosed by St. Clare Health Mission and describes patient rights regarding access to and control over that information. St. Clare Health Mission is required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and applicable federal and state law.

Confidentiality of Medical and Behavioral Health Information

As a general rule, St. Clare Health Mission does not disclose information about patients or their treatment without written consent, except as permitted or required by law. The medical and behavioral health record may include identifying information, dates of appointments, diagnoses, treatment plans, progress notes, medications, lab results, and other information used to provide care.

Providers are legally allowed to use or disclose records or information for treatment, payment, and health care operations purposes. However, St. Clare Health Mission limits disclosures to the minimum necessary and does not routinely disclose PHI outside of the care team without written permission.

Mental health, substance use, HIV/AIDS, and genetic testing information may have additional confidentiality protections and generally require specific written authorization for disclosure, except in limited circumstances defined by law.

How We May Use and Disclose Your Information

- **For Treatment:** Information may be used and shared among authorized medical and behavioral health providers involved in care, including care coordination, referrals, clinical supervision, and integrated treatment planning.
- **For Health Care Operations:** Information may be used to operate and improve clinic services, including quality improvement, patient safety activities, training of staff and volunteers, and compliance with legal requirements.
- **For Public Health and Safety and as Required by Law:** Information may be disclosed without authorization as required or permitted by law, including:
 - Reporting suspected child abuse, elder abuse, or neglect
 - Reporting communicable diseases
 - Responding to court orders, subpoenas, or lawful investigations
 - Preventing a serious and imminent threat to health or safety
 - Workers' compensation claims
- **Emergencies:** Information may be disclosed in life-threatening emergencies when consent cannot be obtained.

Limits of Confidentiality

While St. Clare Health Mission makes every effort to protect the confidentiality of medical and behavioral health information, there are specific circumstances in which medical providers and behavioral health providers may be required or permitted to disclose information without patient consent or authorization, either by clinic policy or as required by federal or state law. These circumstances include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Emergency Situations:** If a patient is involved in a life-threatening emergency and the patient is unable to provide consent, information may be disclosed to medical personnel, emergency responders, or others as necessary to provide emergency care or to protect the patient's health and safety.
- **Child Abuse or Neglect:** If there is reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected, providers at St. Clare Health Mission are mandated reporters under Wisconsin law and are required to immediately report suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate county Department of Social Services or other designated authorities.
- **Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Adults at Risk:** If there is reason to suspect that an elderly person or an incapacitated adult has been abused, neglected, or exploited, providers are required by Wisconsin law to make a report and disclose relevant information to the appropriate protective services agency.
- **Health Oversight and Professional Regulation:** Wisconsin law requires licensed health care providers, including medical and behavioral health professionals, to report certain professional misconduct by members of their own profession. If a patient reports unprofessional conduct by another health care provider, St. Clare Health Mission providers are required to inform the patient of how to make such a report. In limited circumstances, if a patient is a licensed health care provider and it is believed that the patient's condition poses a risk to the public, disclosure to the appropriate licensing

board may be required by law. Wisconsin licensing boards may subpoena relevant records when investigating allegations of professional misconduct or incompetence.

- **Court Proceedings and Legal Process:** Medical and behavioral health records are generally protected under Wisconsin law; however, information may be disclosed if the patient provides written authorization or if disclosure is required by a valid court order. If St. Clare Health Mission receives a subpoena for records or testimony, reasonable efforts will be made to notify the patient so that the patient may seek to limit or block the disclosure. While a court determines how to proceed, records may be sealed and submitted to the Clerk of Court as required by law. In certain civil proceedings, including child abuse cases or cases in which a patient's mental health is at issue, confidentiality protections may be limited if a judge determines the information is necessary for the proper administration of justice. In criminal matters, additional disclosures may be required as permitted or required by law. Privilege protections may not apply when services are provided as part of a court-ordered or third-party evaluation; patients will be informed in advance when applicable.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** Under Wisconsin law, if a medical or behavioral health provider determines that a patient has communicated a specific and immediate threat to cause serious bodily harm or death to an identifiable individual, and the provider believes the patient has the intent and ability to carry out the threat, the provider is required to take reasonable steps to protect the patient or others. These actions may include warning potential victims or guardians, notifying law enforcement, or arranging for hospitalization. Information may also be disclosed when necessary to prevent an immediate and serious threat to the patient's own health or safety.
- **Workers' Compensation:** If a patient files a workers' compensation claim, St. Clare Health Mission may be required by law, upon proper request, to disclose relevant medical or behavioral health information to the patient, employer, insurer, or a certified rehabilitation provider, as permitted by law.
- **Records of Minors:** Wisconsin law contains specific provisions governing access to and disclosure of minors' health records. In many circumstances, parents or legal guardians may have the right to access their child's medical and behavioral health records regardless of custody status. In addition, evaluators in civil commitment or other court-related proceedings may have legal access to records without consent of the minor or parent. Additional exceptions may apply, and these limits will be discussed with patients and guardians when services are provided to minors.

Any other uses or disclosures of information not described in this Notice or not permitted by applicable law will be made only with the patient's valid written authorization.

Integrated Electronic Health Record (EHR)

St. Clare Health Mission utilizes an integrated Electronic Health Record (EHR) system to support documentation, scheduling, care coordination, billing (if applicable), and health care operations, in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and applicable Wisconsin law. Protected health information (PHI) may be created, received, maintained, or transmitted through this system.

Access to PHI within the EHR is limited to authorized members of the workforce who have a legitimate need to access the information for purposes of treatment, payment (if applicable), or health care operations, or as otherwise permitted or required by law. Workforce members are permitted to access only the minimum necessary information required to perform their job-related duties.

PHI may be used or disclosed without the patient's written authorization as permitted by HIPAA for treatment, payment, and health care operations, including clinical supervision, care coordination, quality improvement, and compliance activities. Uses or disclosures of PHI for purposes other than those permitted or required by law will be made only with the patient's valid written authorization.

The integrated EHR system may allow information to be accessed across service areas within St. Clare Health Mission when necessary to support continuity of care. Such access is governed by role-based permissions and minimum necessary standards.

St. Clare Health Mission maintains appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards designed to protect the privacy and security of PHI and to prevent unauthorized access, use, or disclosure, as required by HIPAA. Despite these safeguards, no electronic system can guarantee absolute security.

Patient's Rights

Patients have the right to:

- **Access Records:** Inspect or obtain copies of medical and billing records, with limited exceptions.
 - If a patient requests a copy of the information, St. Clare Health Mission may charge a fee for costs of copying and mailing. Requests may be denied to inspect and copy in some circumstances. St. Clare Health Mission may refuse to provide patient access to certain psychotherapy notes or to information compiled in reasonable anticipation of, or use in, a civil criminal, or administrative proceeding.
- **Request Amendments:** Request corrections to records believed to be inaccurate or incomplete.
 - If a patient feels that protected health information stored about a patient is incorrect or incomplete, the patient may ask to have the information amended. In addition, patients must provide a reason that supports the request. Request may be denied if patient asks to amend information that: 1) was not created by St. Clare Health Mission; the provider will add the request to the information record; 2) is not part of the medical information kept by St. Clare Health Mission; 3) is not part of the information which a patient would be permitted to inspect and copy; 4) is accurate and complete.
- **Request Restrictions:** Request limits on certain uses or disclosures (approval not guaranteed).

- If a patient asks to disclose information to another party, the patient may request limits to the information disclosed. However, the provider is not required to agree to a restriction requested. To request restrictions, the patient must make a request in writing, and describe: 1) what information the patient wants to limit; 2) Whether the patient wants to limit the use, disclosure or both; and 3) to whom patients want the limits to apply.
- **Confidential Communication:** Request contact by alternative means or locations.
- **Accounting of Disclosures:** Receive a list of certain disclosures made without authorization.
- **Paper Copy of This Notice:** Obtain a copy at any time upon request.
- **Designate a Representative:** Allow a legal guardian or medical power of attorney to act on the patient's behalf.
- **Breach Notification:** Be notified if unsecured PHI is compromised.

Requests must be submitted in writing. Certain rights may be limited by law.

Electronic Communication

Patients may choose to communicate via email or text message. These methods may not be fully secure. Reasonable safeguards will be used; however, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Patients may opt out of electronic communication at any time.

Our Responsibilities

St. Clare Health Mission is required by law to:

- Maintain the privacy and security of PHI
- Provide notice of legal duties and privacy practices
- Notify patients of breaches of unsecured PHI
- Follow the terms of this Notice

Changes to This Notice

St. Clare Health Mission reserves the right to revise this Notice. Revised versions apply to all PHI maintained by the clinic and will be available upon request and posted at the clinic.

Complaints

Patients may file a complaint if they believe privacy rights have been violated. Complaints may be submitted to St. Clare Health Mission or to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. No retaliation will occur for filing a complaint.

Consent and Acknowledgment

Under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), you have certain rights regarding the use and disclosure of your protected health information. By signing below, you are acknowledging that you have received a copy of HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices.

By signing below, I confirm that:

- I have read (or had read to me) this document in full.
- I understand and agree to the information and consents provided above.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Patient Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

If the patient is a minor or has a legal guardian:

Parent/Guardian: _____ **Date:** _____

Relationship to Patient: _____