

# **NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES**

**Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule**

**ALVIN ANDERLE MEMORIAL RHEUMATOLOGY RESEARCH CLINIC, P. A.**

**ANDERLE INVESTMENTS, L. L. P.**

**M. E. THURMOND-ANDERLE, M. D., P. A.**

**Adopted On January 1, 2006**

# NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Practice Name----- Alvin Anderle Memorial Rheumatology Research Clinic, P. A.  
Anderle Investments, L. L. P.  
M. E. Thurmond-Anderle, M. D., P. A.

Effective Date ----- January 1, 2006

## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

As required by the Privacy Regulations created as a result of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)

**THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU, AS A PATIENT OF THIS PRACTICE, MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED, AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO YOUR INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION.**

**PLEASE REVIEW THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY.**

### **A. OUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR PRIVACY**

Our practice is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your individually identifiable health information. In conducting our business, we will create records regarding you and the treatment and services we provide to you. We are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of health information that identifies you. We are also required by law to provide you with this Notice of our legal duties and the privacy practices that we maintain in our practice concerning your individually identifiable health information. By federal and state law, we must follow the terms of the Notice of Privacy Practices that we have in affect at the time.

We realize that these laws are complicated, but we must provide you with the following important information:

- ✧ How we may use and disclose your individually identifiable health information
- ✧ Your privacy rights in your individually identifiable health information
- ✧ Our obligations concerning the use and disclosure of your individually identifiable health information

**The terms of this Notice apply to all records containing your individually identifiable health information that are created or retained by our practice. We reserve the right to revise or amend this Notice of Privacy Practices. Any revision or amendment to this Notice will be effective for all of your records that our practice has created or maintained in the past, and for any of your records that we create or maintain in the future. Our practice will post a copy of our current Notice in our offices in a visible location at all times, and you may request a copy of our most current Notice at any time.**

### **B. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS NOTICE, PLEASE CONTACT:**

**Office Manager · 6701 Woodward Street  
Amarillo, Texas 79106 · (806) 379-7732**

### **C. WE MAY USE & DISCLOSURE YOUR INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS**

1. **Treatment.** Our practice may use your individually identifiable health information to treat you. *For example, we may ask you to have laboratory tests, such as blood or urine tests, and we may use the results to help us reach a diagnosis. We might use your individually identifiable health information in order to write a prescription for you, or we might disclose your individually identifiable health information to a pharmacy when we order a prescription for you. Many of the people who work for our practice – including, but not limited to, our doctors and nurses – may use or disclose your individually identifiable health information to treat you or to assist others in your treatment. Additionally, we may disclose your individually identifiable health information to others who may assist in your care, such as your spouse, children, or parents.*
2. **Payment.** Our practice may use and disclose your individually identifiable health information in order to bill and collect payment for the services and items you may receive from us. *For example, we may contact your health insurer to certify that you are eligible for benefits, and for what range of benefits, and we may provide your insurer with details regarding your treatment to determine if your insurer will cover, or pay for, your treatment. We also may use and disclose your individually identifiable health information to obtain payment from third parties that may be responsible for such costs, such as family members. Also, we may use your individually identifiable health information to bill you directly for services and items.*
3. **Health Care Operations.** Our practice may use and disclose your individually identifiable health information to operate our business. *As examples of ways in which we may use and disclose your information for our operations, our practice may use your individually identifiable health information to evaluate the quality of care you received from us, or to conduct cost-management and business planning activities for our practice.*
4. **Appointment Reminders.** Our practice may use and disclose your individually identifiable health information to contact you and remind you of an appointment.
5. **Treatment Options.** Our practice may use and disclose your individually identifiable health information to inform you of potential treatment options or alternatives.
6. **Health-Related Benefits & Services.** Our practice may use and disclose your individually identifiable health information to inform you of health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.
7. **Release of Information to Family/Friends.** Our practice may release your individually identifiable health information to a friend or family member that is involved in your care, or who assists in taking care of you. *For example, a parent or guardian may ask that a babysitter take their child to the pediatrician's office for treatment of a cold. In this example, the babysitter may have access to this child's medical information.*
8. **Disclosures Required by Law.** Our practice will use and disclose your individually identifiable health information when we are required to do so by federal, state, or local law.

### **D. USES & DISCLOSURES OF YOUR INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION IN CERTAIN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

The following categories describe unique scenarios in which we may use or disclose your identifiable health information:

1. **Public Health Risks.** Our practice may disclose your individually identifiable health information to public health authorities that are authorized by law to collect information for the purpose of:

- ✧ Maintaining vital records, such as births and deaths
  - ✧ Reporting child abuse or neglect
  - ✧ Preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability
  - ✧ Notifying a person regarding potential exposure to a communicable disease
  - ✧ Notifying a person regarding a potential risk for spreading or contracting a disease or condition
  - ✧ Reporting reactions to drugs or problems with products or devices
  - ✧ Notifying individuals if a product or device that may be in use has been recalled
  - ✧ Notifying appropriate government agency(ies) and authority(ies) regarding the potential abuse or neglect of an adult patient, including domestic violence; however, we will only disclose this information if the patient agrees or we are required or authorized by law to disclose this information
  - ✧ Notifying your employer under limited circumstances related primarily to workplace injury or illness or medical surveillance
- 2. Health Oversight Activities.** Our practice may disclose your individually identifiable health information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. *Oversight activities can include, for example, investigations, inspections, audits, surveys, licensure and disciplinary actions; civil, administrative, and criminal procedures or actions; or other activities necessary for the government to monitor government programs, compliance with civil rights laws and the health care system in general.*
- 3. Lawsuits & Similar Proceedings.** Our practice may use and disclose your individually identifiable health information in response to a court or administrative order, if you are involved in a lawsuit or similar proceeding. We also may disclose your individually identifiable health information in response to a discovery request, subpoena, or other lawful process by another party involved in the dispute, but only if we have made an effort to inform you of the request to obtain an order protecting the information the party has requested.
- 4. Law Enforcement.** We may release individually identifiable health information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official:
- ✧ Regarding a crime victim in certain situations, if we are unable to obtain the person's agreement
  - ✧ Concerning a death we believe has resulted from criminal conduct
  - ✧ Regarding criminal conduct at our offices
  - ✧ In response to a warrant, summons, court order, subpoena or similar legal process
  - ✧ To identify/locate a suspect, material witness, fugitive or missing person
  - ✧ In an emergency, to report a crime, including the location of victim(s) of the crime, or the description, identify or location of the perpetrator
- 5. Deceased Patients.** Our practice may release individually identifiable health information to a medical examiner or coroner to identify a deceased individual or to identify the cause of death. If necessary, we also may release information in order for funeral directors to perform their jobs.
- 6. Organ & Tissue Donation.** Our practice may release your individually identifiable health information to organizations that handle organ, eye or tissue procurement or transplantation, including organ donation banks, as necessary to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation if you are an organ donor.
- 7. Research.** Our practice may use and disclose your individually identifiable health information for research purposes in certain limited circumstances. We will obtain your written authorization to use your individually identifiable health information for research purposes except when: (a) our use or disclosure was approved by an Institutional Review Board or a Privacy Board; (b) we obtain the oral or written agreement of a researcher that (i) the information being sought is necessary for the research study; (ii) the use or disclosure of your individually identifiable health information is being used only for the research and (iii) the researcher will not remove any of your individually identifiable health information from our practice; or (c) the individually identifiable health

information sought by the researcher only relates to decedents and the researcher agrees either orally or in writing that the use or disclosure is necessary for the research and, if we request it, to provide us with proof of death prior to access to the individually identifiable health information of the decedents.

8. **Serious Threats to Health or Safety.** Our practice may use and disclose your individually identifiable health information when necessary to reduce or prevent a serious threat to your health or safety or the health and safety of another individual or the public. Under these circumstances, we will only make disclosures to a person or organization able to help prevent the threat.
9. **Military.** Our practice may disclose your individually identifiable health information if you are a member of U.S. or foreign military forces, including veterans, and if required by the appropriate authorities.
10. **National Security.** Our practice may disclose your individually identifiable health information to federal officials for intelligence and national security activities authorized by law. We also may disclose your individually identifiable health information to federal officials in order to protect the President, other officials or foreign heads of state, or to conduct investigations.
11. **Inmates.** Our practice may disclose your individually identifiable health information to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials if you are an inmate or under the custody of a law enforcement official. Disclosures for these purposes would be necessary: (a) for the institution to provide health care services to you, (b) for the safety and security of the institution, and/or (c) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of other individuals.
12. **Workers' Compensation.** Our practice may release your individually identifiable health information for workers' compensation and similar programs.

#### **E. YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION**

You have the following rights regarding the individually identifiable health information that we maintain about you:

1. **Confidential Communications.** You have the right to request that our practice communicate with you about your health and related issues in a particular manner or at a certain location. *For instance, you may ask that we contact your at home, rather than work.* In order to request a type of confidential communication, you must make a written request to our **Office Manager (806.379.7732)** specifying the requested method of contact, or the location where you wish to be contacted. Our practice will accommodate **reasonable** requests. You do not need to give a reason for your request.
2. **Requesting Restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your individually identifiable health information for treatment, payment and healthcare operations. Additionally, you have the right to request that we restrict our disclosure of your individually identifiable health information to certain individuals involved in your care or the payment of your care, such as family members and friends. **We are not required to agree to your request.** However, if we do agree, we are bound by our agreement except when otherwise required by law, in emergencies, or when the information is necessary to treat you. In order to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your individually identifiable health information, you must make your request in writing to our **Office Manager (806.379.7732)**. Your request must describe in a clear and concise fashion:
  - ✳ the information you wish restricted;
  - ✳ whether you are requesting to limit our practice's use, disclosure or both; and
  - ✳ to whom you want the limits to apply.
3. **Inspection & Copies.** You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of the individually identifiable health information that may be used to make decisions about you, including patient medical records and billing records, but not including psychotherapy notes. You must submit your request in writing to our **Office Manager (806.379.7732)** in order to inspect and/or obtain a copy of you individually identifiable health information. Our practice may charge a fee

for the costs of copying, mailing, labor and supplies associated with your request. Our practice may deny your request to inspect and/or copy in certain limited circumstances. However, you may request a review of our denial. Another licensed health care professional chosen by us will conduct reviews.

4. **Amendment.** You may ask us to amend your health information if you believe it is incorrect or incomplete, and you may request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for our practice. To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to our **Office Manager (806.379.7732)**. You must provide us with a reason that supports your request for amendment. Our practice will deny your request if you fail to submit your request, and the reason supporting your request, in writing. Also, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that is in our opinion: (a) accurate and complete; (b) not part of the individually identifiable health information kept by or for our practice; (c) not part of the individually identifiable health information which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or (d) not created by our practice, unless the individual or entity that created the information is not available to amend the information.
5. **Accounting of Disclosures.** All of our patients have the right to request an “accounting of disclosures.” An “accounting of disclosures” is a list of certain non-routine disclosures our practice has made of your individually identifiable health information for non-treatment or operational purposes. Use of your individually identifiable health information as part of the routine patient care in our practice is not required to be documented. For example, the doctor sharing information with the nurse; or the billing department using your information to file your insurance claim. In order to obtain an accounting of disclosure, you must submit your request in writing to our **Office Manager (806.379.7732)**. All requests for an “accounting of disclosures” must state a time period, which may not be longer than six (6) years from the date of disclosure and may not include dates before April 12, 2003. The first list you request within a 12-month period is free of charge, but our practice may charge you for additional lists within the same 12-month period. Our practice will notify you of the costs involved with additional requests, and you may withdraw your request before you incur any costs.
6. **Right to a Paper Copy of this Notice.** You are entitled to receive a paper copy of our Notice of Privacy Practices. You may ask us to give you a copy of this Notice at any time. To obtain a paper copy of this Notice, contact **any of our staff members**.
7. **Right to File a Complaint.** If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our practice or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with our practice, contact our **Office Manager (806.379.7732)**. **ALL COMPLAINTS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING. YOU WILL NOT BE PENALIZED FOR FILING A COMPLAINT.**
8. **Right to Provide an Authorization for Other Uses & Disclosures.** Our practice will obtain your written authorization for uses and disclosures that are not identified by this Notice or permitted by applicable law. Any authorization you provide to us regarding the use and disclosure of you individually identifiable health information may be revoked at any time in writing. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your individually identifiable health information for the reasons described in the authorization. Please note, we are required to retain records of your care.

Again, if you have any questions regarding this Notice or our health information privacy policies, please contact our **Office Manager (806.379.7732)**.