

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

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.

This Notice describes the privacy practices of Watauga Dental Center (referred to herein as “**WDC**”, “**we**” or “**our**”). We use and share protected health information (“**PHI**”) about you to provide your health benefits as a Watauga Dental Center patient. We use and share your PHI to carry out treatment, payment and health care operations. We also use and share your PHI for other reasons as allowed and required by law. We have the duty to keep your health information private and to follow the terms of this Notice. The effective date of this Notice is January 1, 2026.

PHI is health information that includes your name, member number or other identifiers, and is used or shared by us. PHI includes health information about substance use disorders and biometric information (like a voiceprint).

Why do we use or share your PHI?

We use or share your PHI to provide you with health care benefits. Your PHI is also used or shared for treatment, payment, and health care operations.

For Treatment

We may use or share your PHI to give you, or arrange for, your dental care. This treatment also includes referrals between your doctors or other health care providers. For example, we may share information about your health condition with a specialist. This helps the specialist talk about your treatment with your doctor.

For Payment

We may use or share PHI to make decisions on payment. This may include claims, approvals for treatment, and decisions about medical need. Your name, your condition, and your treatment given may be written on the claim.

For Dental Care Operations

We may use or share PHI about you to run our dental practice. For example, we may use information from your claim to let you know about a health program that could help you. We may also use or share your PHI to solve your concerns. Your PHI may also be used to see that claims are paid correctly.

Dental care operations involve many daily business needs. It includes but is not limited to, the following:

- Improving quality;
- Actions in health programs to help members with certain conditions (such as asthma);
- Conducting or arranging for medical review;
- Legal services, including fraud and abuse detection and prosecution programs;
- Actions to help us obey laws;
- Addressing member needs, including solving complaints and grievances.

We may also use your PHI to give you reminders about your appointments. We may use your PHI to give you information about other treatment(s), or other health-related benefits and services.

When can we use or share your PHI without getting written authorization (approval) from you?

In addition to treatment, payment and health care operations, the law allows or requires WDC to use and share your PHI for several other purposes including the following:

Required by law

We will use or share information about you as required by law. We will share your PHI when required by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This may be for a court case, other legal review, or when required for law enforcement purposes.

Public Health

Your PHI may be used or shared for public health activities. This may include helping public health agencies to prevent or control disease.

Health Care Oversight

Your PHI may be used or shared with government agencies. They may need your PHI for audits.

Research

Your PHI may be used or shared for research in certain cases, such as when approved by a privacy or institutional review board.

Legal or Administrative Proceedings

Your PHI may be used or shared for legal proceedings, such as in response to a court order.

Law Enforcement

Your PHI may be used or shared with police for law enforcement purposes, such as to help find a suspect, witness or missing person.

Health and Safety

Your PHI may be shared to prevent a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public.

Government Functions

Your PHI may be shared with the government for special functions. An example would be to protect the President.

Victims of Abuse, Neglect or Domestic Violence

Your PHI may be shared with legal authorities if we believe that a person is a victim of abuse or neglect.

Workers' Compensation

Your PHI may be used or shared to obey Workers' Compensation laws.

Other Disclosures

Your PHI may be shared with funeral directors or coroners to help them do their jobs.

Additional Restrictions on Use and Disclosure.

Some federal and state laws may require special privacy protections that restrict the use and disclosure of certain types of health information. Such laws may protect the following types of information: alcohol and substance use disorders, biometric information, child or adult abuse or neglect including sexual assault, communicable diseases, genetic information, HIV/AIDS, mental health, minors' information, prescriptions, reproductive health, and sexually transmitted diseases. We will follow the more stringent law, where it applies to us.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Information. Although we are not a substance use disorder treatment program under federal law (a "SUD Program"), we may receive information from a SUD Program about you. We may not disclose SUD information for use in a civil, criminal, administrative, or legislative proceeding against you unless we have (i) your written consent, or (ii) a court order accompanied by a subpoena or other

legal requirement compelling disclosure issued after we and you were given notice and an opportunity to be heard.

When do we need your written authorization (approval) to use or share your PHI?

We need your written approval to use or share your PHI for a purpose other than those listed in this Notice. We need your authorization before we disclose your PHI for the following: (1) most uses and disclosures of psychotherapy notes; (2) uses and disclosures for marketing purposes; and (3) uses and disclosures that involve the sale of PHI. You may cancel a written approval that you have given us. Your cancellation will not apply to actions already taken by us because of the approval you already gave to us.

What are our duties?

We are required to:

- Keep your PHI private;
- Give you written information such as this on our duties and privacy practices about your PHI;
- Provide you with a notice in the event of any breach of your unsecured PHI;
- Not use or disclose your genetic information for underwriting purposes;
- Follow the terms of this Notice.

This Notice is Subject to Change

We reserve the right to change its information practices and terms of this Notice at any time. If we do, the new terms and practices will then apply to all PHI we keep. If we make any material changes, we will post the revised Notice on our website and send the revised Notice, or information about the material change and how to obtain the revised Notice, at your next dental appointment. This Notice is available on our website at www.wataugadental.com.