Behavioral Health Link

**Telephone: 404-420-3202**
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# NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

**THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU MAY ACCESS THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.**

*If you have any questions about this Privacy Notice, please contact BHL's Privacy Officer at the phone or fax number listed above.*

## Understanding Your Health Information

As you may know, each visit you make to a physician, hospital, or other health provider or service is documented in a health information record in order to support your service. This record usually contains your symptoms, any assessments or evaluations, test results, diagnoses, communications among health professionals who contribute to your care and treatment, and a treatment plan for the future. It describes the Behavioral Health Link (BHL) services and any referrals that you received from BHL or any of its programs, serves as a source of data for organizational planning and marketing, and helps Behavioral Health Link continually assess and improve services and outcomes.

Understanding what is in your record and how your health information is used helps to ensure the accuracy of your health information. It also helps you to make informed decisions concerning authorizing the disclosure of your health information to others, and to understand who may access your health information, what information they may have access to, and under what circumstances your health information may be accessed. An authorization gives written permission for specific disclosures only. In circumstances other than those involving services and health care operations, a separate authorization will be required from you before the information is released. In addition, an authorization will be required before the release of notes of conversations between you and a BHL licensed clinical staff member during telephone conversations or any private individual, group, joint, or family counseling evaluation or session. These notes are given greater protection than other private health information.

## Your Health Information Rights

Behavioral Health Link will compile a health information record that is the physical property of Behavioral Health Link; however the information belongs to you. You have the right to:

- request a paper copy of this Notice of Privacy Practices upon your request,
- revoke your authorization to use or disclose health information except when action has already been taken,
- review the information in your record (which may be denied under certain circumstances),
- request to amend your health record (which may be denied),
- request a restriction on certain uses and disclosures of your information, however BHL is not required to agree to the restriction you request,
- obtain an accounting of disclosures of your health information, and
- request communications concerning your health information by other means or locations.

A request for any of these modifications should be addressed in writing to the BHL Director of Quality using the contact information listed above.

**Responsibilities of Behavioral Health Link**
Behavioral Health Link will maintain the privacy of your health information, and provide you with a notice as to our legal duties and privacy practices about the information we collect and maintain about you. BHL will abide by the terms of this notice and notify you if we are unable to agree to a requested restriction or accommodate any requests you may have to communicate health information by other means or at other locations.

Behavioral Health Link reserves the right to change its privacy practices. If privacy practices change, a revised notice will be given to you at your request.

BHL is not a Covered Entity under HIPPA, but complies with federal and state privacy laws and the privacy provisions of its Business Associate Agreement with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.

*Behavioral Health Link will not use or disclose your health information without your authorization, except as described in this notice.*

You may file a complaint with the Owners of Behavioral Health Link in writing using the contact information listed above, or with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, if you believe your privacy rights have been violated. There will be no retaliation for filing a complaint.

**Disclosures for Treatment and Health Operations**
Your health information will be recorded in your record and used to determine the course of treatment that should work best for you. Copies of this record will be provided to a healthcare provider and/or facility to assist in treating you once you are referred for treatment.

Your health information may be used to assess the services and outcomes in your case and others like it. This information will then be used in an effort to continually improve the quality and effectiveness of the services provided by Behavioral Health Link.

**Other Uses or Disclosures**
Child, Elder, Disabled, or Domestic Abuse—If there is reasonable cause to believe that a child, elderly person, or disabled adult has been abused, neglected, or exploited, a report will be filed with the proper authorities.

Threats to Health or Safety—If it is believed that you are a danger to yourself or someone else, your information may be disclosed in order to provide protection to you or the intended victim.

Legal Proceedings—If you are involved in a court proceeding and there is question concerning your records or the services provided by BHL or any of its programs, that information will not be released without *either* your written consent *or* a court order. If you are being evaluated for a third party or pursuant to a court order, you will be informed in advance and the privilege of confidentiality is not applicable.

Correctional Institution—If you are an inmate of a correctional institution, BHL may disclose to the institution or its agents health information necessary for your health, and the health and safety of other individuals.

Health Oversight—If any of the licensed clinical staff is a subject of investigation by their respective Georgia licensing board, the disclosure of protected health information may be required.

Business Associates—Behavioral Health Link contracts with Business Associates to provide certain services; for examples: physician services such as the Behavioral Health Link Medical Director or licensed clinical professionals who provide services through the Behavioral Health Link Mobile Crisis Team. When these services are contracted, we may disclose your health information to our Business Associate so that they can perform the services for which they are contracted to Behavioral Health Link. The Business Associate is required to appropriately safeguard and protect your health information.

Worker's Compensation—In order to comply with laws related to worker's compensation, your protected health information may be disclosed as authorized by law in order to provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

**Confidentiality of Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS Records**
For individuals who have received treatment, diagnosis, or referral for treatment from drug or alcohol abuse programs, the confidentiality of drug or alcohol abuse records is protected by federal and state law and regulations. As a general rule, we may not tell a person outside the programs that you attend any of these programs, or disclose any information identifying you as an alcohol or drug abuser, unless:

- you authorize the disclosure in writing; or
- the disclosure is permitted by a court order; or
- the disclosure is made to medical personnel in a medical emergency or to qualified personnel for research, audit, or program evaluation purposes; or
- you threaten to commit a crime either at the drug abuse or alcohol program or against any person who works for our programs.

A violation by Behavioral Health Link of the federal law and regulations governing drug or alcohol abuse is a crime. Suspected violations may be reported to the Unites States Attorney in the district where the violation occurs. Federal law and regulations governing confidentiality of drug or alcohol abuse permit us to report suspected child abuse or neglect under state law to appropriate state or local authorities. (Reference: 42 U.S.C. § 290dd-2 for federal law and 42 C.F.R. Part 2 for federal regulations governing confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse patient records.)

Behavioral Health Link and its staff are prohibited by state law from intentionally or knowingly disclosing information regarding the HIV/AIDS status of a consumer. AIDS confidential information may be disclosed only under the following limited circumstances:

- disclosure may be made to a parent or guardian if the patient is a minor or is incompetent;

*or*

- to persons designated by the consumer in writing.

Upon consultation among the BHL Directors, Medical Director, and the legal counsel for the organization, it may be considered appropriate under Georgia state privacy standards to disclose that a consumer is infected with HIV to a spouse, sexual partner or child of the infected consumer if there is agreement among the BHL Directors, Medical Director, licensed clinician, any other health care providers with whom care is coordinated, and BHL legal counsel that this person is at risk of being infected and every attempt has been made to contact the infected consumer to discuss disclosure; or when the disclosure is authorized by other state or federal law. (Reference: Ga. Code Ann § 24-9-47 state regulations governing confidentiality of HIV/AIDS patient records.)