

# **Notice of Privacy Policy**

Effective March 1, 2013

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY.

The following is the Notice of Privacy Practices of Step Forward Foot and Ankle (“Covered “Entity”) as described in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 and regulations promulgated thereunder, commonly known as HIPAA. HIPAA requires Covered Entity by law to maintain the privacy of your protected health information and to provide you with notice of Covered Entity's legal duties and privacy policies with respect to your protected health information. We are required by law to abide by the terms of this Privacy Notice.

## **Your Protected Health Information**

We collect protected health information from you through treatment, payment and related healthcare operations, the application and enrollment process, and/or healthcare providers or health plans, or through other means, as applicable. Your protected health information that is protected by law broadly includes any past, present and future healthcare information. Your protected health information includes any information that is created or received through oral, written or electronic communications by certain health care entities, including health care providers, such as physicians and hospitals, as well as, health insurance companies or plans. The law specifically protects health information that contains data consisting of eighteen (18) identifiers described in the HIPAA Privacy Rule including but not limited to your name, address, social security number, date of birth and others that could be used to identify you as the individual patient who is associated with that health information.

## **Uses or Disclosures of Your Protected Health Information**

Generally, we may not use or disclose your protected health information without your permission. Further, once your permission has been obtained, we must use or disclose your protected health information in accordance with the specific terms that permission. The following uses and disclosures require an authorization:

1. Most uses and disclosures of psychotherapy notes;
2. Uses and Disclosures of protected health information for marketing purposes unless (i) the communication occurs face-to-face; (ii) consists of marketing gifts of nominal value; (iii) is regarding a prescription refill reminder that is for a prescription currently prescribed or a generic equivalent; (iv) is for treatment pertaining to existing condition(s) and Step Forward Foot and Ankle does not receive any financial remuneration in either case or cash equivalent; and/or (v) communication from a healthcare provider to recommend or direct alternative treatments, therapies, healthcare providers, or settings of care when Step Forward Foot and Ankle does not receive any financial remuneration for making the communication; and
3. Disclosures that constitute a sale of protected health information

The following are the circumstances under which Step Forward Foot and Ankle is permitted by law to use or disclose your protected health information:

## Without Your Consent

Without your consent, we may use or disclose your protected health information in order to provide you with services and the treatment you require or request, or to collect payment for those services, and to conduct other related health care operations otherwise permitted or required by law. In addition, we are permitted to disclose your protected health information within and among our workforce in order to accomplish these same purposes. However, even with your permission, we are still required to limit such uses or disclosures to the minimal amount of protected health information that is reasonably required to provide those services or complete those activities.

*Examples of treatment activities include:* (a) the provision, coordination, or management of health care and related services by health care providers; (b) consultation between health care providers relating to a patient; or (c) the referral of a patient for health care from one health care provider to another. *Examples of payment activities include:* (a) billing and collection activities and related data processing; (b) actions by a health plan or insurer to obtain premiums or to determine or fulfill its responsibilities for coverage and provision of benefits under its health plan or insurance agreement, determinations of eligibility or coverage, adjudication or subrogation of health benefit claims; (c) medical necessity and appropriateness of care reviews, utilization review activities; and (d) disclosure to consumer reporting agencies of information relating to collection of premiums or reimbursement. *Examples of health care operations include:* (a) development of clinical guidelines; (b) contacting patients with information about treatment alternatives or communications in connection with case management or care coordination; (c) reviewing the qualifications of and training health care professionals; (d) underwriting and premium rating; (e) medical review, legal services, and auditing functions; and (f) general administrative activities such as customer service and data analysis.

## As Required By Law

We may use or disclose your protected health information to the extent that such use or disclosure is required by law and the use or disclosure complies with and is limited to the relevant requirements of such law. Examples of instances in which we are required to disclose your protected health information include: (a) public health activities including, preventing or controlling disease or other injury, public health surveillance or investigations, reporting adverse events with respect to food or dietary supplements or product defects or problems to the Food and Drug Administration, medical surveillance of the workplace or to evaluate whether the individual has a work-related illness or injury in order to comply with Federal or state law; (b) disclosures regarding victims of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence including, reporting to social service or protective services agencies; (c) health oversight activities including, audits, civil, administrative, or criminal investigations, inspections, licensure or disciplinary actions, or civil, administrative, or criminal proceedings or actions, or other activities necessary for appropriate oversight of government benefit programs; (d) judicial and administrative proceedings in response to an order of a court or administrative tribunal, a warrant, subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process; (e) law enforcement purposes for the purpose of identifying or locating a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person, or reporting crimes in emergencies, or reporting a death; (f) disclosures about decedents for purposes of cadaveric donation of organs, eyes or tissue; (g) for research purposes under certain conditions; (h) to avert a serious threat to health or safety; (i) military and

veterans activities; (j) national security and intelligence activities, protective services of the President and others; (k) medical suitability determinations by entities that are components of the Department of State; (l) correctional institutions and other law enforcement custodial situations; (m) covered entities that are government programs providing public benefits, and for workers' compensation.

## **Workers' Compensation**

We may release your protected health information for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

## **Treatment Alternatives**

We may use and disclose your protected health information to manage and coordinate your healthcare and inform you of treatment alternatives that may be of interest of you. This may include telling you about treatments, services, products and/or other healthcare providers.

## **Appointment Reminders**

We may use and disclose your protected health information to provide a reminder to you about an appointment you have for treatment or medical care at Step Forward Foot and Ankle.

## **Business Associates**

There are some services provided at Step Forward Foot and Ankle through contracts with business associates. When these companies are contracted to perform services for Step Forward Foot and Ankle, we may disclose your protected health information to these companies so that they can perform the job we have asked them to do. However, to protect your protected health information, we require the business associate to appropriately safeguard your protected health information.

## **Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors**

We may release protected health information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary to identify a deceased person or determine cause of death. We may also release protected health information to funeral directors as necessary for them to carry out their duties.

## **Inmates**

If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of law enforcement official, we may release your protected health information to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. The release of protected health information is required: (1) for the institution to provide you with health care; (2) to protect your health and safety of others; and (3) for the safety and security of the correctional institution.

## **All Other Situations, With Your Specific Authorization**

Except as otherwise permitted or required, as described above, we may not use or disclose your protected health information without your written authorization. Further, we are required to use or disclose your protected health information consistent with the terms of your authorization. You may revoke your authorization, in writing, to use or disclose any protected health information at any time, except to the extent that we have taken action in reliance on such authorization, or, if you provided the authorization as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage, other law provides the insurer with the right to contest a claim under the policy.

## **Your Rights With Respect to Your Protected Health Information**

Under HIPAA, you have certain rights with respect to your protected health information. The following is a brief overview of your rights and our duties with respect to enforcing those rights.

### **Right to Request Restrictions on Use or Disclosure**

You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of your protected health information about yourself. You may request restrictions on the following uses or disclosures: (a) treatment, payment, or healthcare operations; (b) disclosures to family members, relatives, or close personal friends of protected health information directly relevant to your care or payment related to your health care, or your location, general condition, or death; (c) instances in which you are not present or your permission cannot practicably be obtained due to your incapacity or an emergency circumstance; (d) permitting other persons to act on your behalf to pick up filled prescriptions, medical supplies, X-rays, or other similar forms of protected health information; or (e) disclosure to a public or private entity authorized by law or by its charter to assist in disaster relief efforts.

While we are not required to agree to any requested restriction, if we agree to a restriction, we are bound not to use or disclose your protected healthcare information in violation of such restriction, except in certain emergency situations. We will not accept a request to restrict uses or disclosures that are otherwise required by law.

### **Right to Request Restriction on Disclosures to Health Plans for Services Paid for In Full at Time of Service]**

You have the right under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Section 13405(a) to request Step Forward Foot and Ankle to restrict disclosures of protected health information to a health plan for purposes of carrying out payment or healthcare operations if the protected health information pertains solely to a healthcare item or service for which Step Forward Foot and Ankle has been paid out of pocket in full at time of service.

### **Right to Receive Confidential Communications**

You have the right to receive confidential communications of your protected health information. We may require written requests. We may condition the provision of confidential communications on you providing us with information as to how payment will be handled and specification of an alternative address or other method of contact. We may require that a request contain a statement that disclosure of all or a part of the information

to which the request pertains could endanger you. We may not require you to provide an explanation of the basis for your request as a condition of providing communications to you on a confidential basis. We must permit you to request and must accommodate reasonable requests by you to receive communications of protected health information from us by alternative means or at alternative locations.

## **Right to Inspect and Copy Your Protected Health Information**

Your designated record set is a group of records we maintain that includes Medical records and billing records about you, or enrollment, payment, claims adjudication, and case or medical management records systems, as applicable. You have the right of access in order to inspect and obtain a copy your protected health information contained in your designated record set, except for (a) psychotherapy notes, (b) information compiled in reasonable anticipation of, or for use in, a civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceeding, and (c) health information maintained by us to the extent to which the provision of access to you would be prohibited by law. We may require written requests. We must provide you with access to your protected health information in the form or format requested by you, if it is readily producible in such form or format, or, if not, in a readable hard copy form or such other form or format. We may provide you with a summary of the protected health information requested, in lieu of providing access to the protected health information or may provide an explanation of the protected health information to which access has been provided, if you agree in advance to such a summary or explanation and agree to the fees imposed for such summary or explanation. We will provide you with access as requested in a timely manner, including arranging with you a convenient time and place to inspect or obtain copies of your protected health information or mailing a copy to you at your request. We will discuss the scope, format, and other aspects of your request for access as necessary to facilitate timely access. If you request a copy of your protected health information or agree to a summary or explanation of such information, we may charge a reasonable cost-based fee for copying, postage, if you request a mailing, and the costs of preparing an explanation or summary as agreed upon in advance. We reserve the right to deny you access to and copies of certain protected health information as permitted or required by law. We will reasonably attempt to accommodate any request for protected health information by, to the extent possible, giving you access to other protected health information after excluding the information as to which we have a ground to deny access. Upon denial of a request for access or request for information, we will provide you with a written denial specifying the legal basis for denial, a statement of your rights, and a description of how you may file a complaint with us. If we do not maintain the information that is the subject of your request for access but we know where the requested information is maintained, we will inform you of where to direct your request for access.

## **Right to Amend Your Protected Health Information**

You have the right to request that we amend your protected health information or a record about you contained in your designated record set, for as long as the designated record set is maintained by us. We have the right to deny your request for amendment, if: (a) we determine that the information or record that is the subject of the request was not created by us, unless you provide a reasonable basis to believe that the originator of the information is no longer available to act on the requested amendment, (b) the information is not part of your designated record set maintained by us, (c) the information is prohibited from inspection by law, or (d) the information is accurate and complete. We may require that you submit written requests and provide a reason to support the requested amendment. If we deny your request, we will provide you with a written denial stating the basis of the denial, your right to submit a written statement disagreeing with the denial, and a description of how you may file a complaint with us or the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (“DHHS”). This denial will also include a notice that if you do not submit a statement of disagreement, you

may request that we include your request for amendment and the denial with any future disclosures of your protected health information that is the subject of the requested amendment. Copies of all requests, denials, and statements of disagreement will be included in your designated record set. If we accept your request for amendment, we will make reasonable efforts to inform and provide the amendment within a reasonable time to persons identified by you as having received protected health information of yours prior to amendment and persons that we know have the protected health information that is the subject of the amendment and that may have relied, or could foreseeably rely, on such information to your detriment. All requests for amendment shall be sent to Step Forward Foot and Ankle's Privacy Officer.

## **Right to Receive an Accounting of Disclosures of Your Protected Health Information**

You have the right to receive a written accounting of all disclosures of your protected health information that we have made within the six (6) year period immediately preceding the date on which the accounting is requested. You may request an accounting of disclosures for a period of time less than six (6) years from the date of the request. Such disclosures will include the date of each disclosure, the name and, if known, the address of the entity or person who received the information, a brief description of the information disclosed, and a brief statement of the purpose and basis of the disclosure or, in lieu of such statement, a copy of your written authorization or written request for disclosure pertaining to such information. We are not required to provide accountings of disclosures for the following purposes: (a) treatment, payment, and healthcare operations, (b) disclosures pursuant to your authorization, (c) disclosures to you, (d) for a facility directory or to persons involved in your care, (e) for national security or intelligence purposes, (f) to correctional institutions, and (g) with respect to disclosures occurring prior to 4/14/03. We reserve our right to temporarily suspend your right to receive an accounting of disclosures to health oversight agencies or law enforcement officials, as required by law. We will provide the first accounting to you in any twelve (12) month period without charge, but will impose a reasonable cost-based fee for responding to each subsequent request for accounting within that same twelve (12) month period. All requests for an accounting shall be sent to Step Forward Foot and Ankle's Privacy Officer.

## **Questions or Complaints**

If you have questions regarding this Notice or if you believe your privacy rights have been violated or you wish to file a complaint about our privacy practices, you may contact the Step Forward Foot and Ankle Privacy Officer by phone or submission of your complaint in writing by mail to the Step Forward Foot and Ankle Privacy Officer. You also have the right to file your complaint with the Secretary of DHHS. A complaint must name the entity that is the subject of the complaint and describe the acts or omissions believed to be in violation of the applicable requirements of HIPAA or this Privacy Policy. A complaint must be received by us or filed with the Secretary of DHHS within 180 days of when you knew or should have known that the act or omission complained of occurred. You will not be penalized for filing any complaint. As required by law, Step Forward Foot and Ankle will notify you in the event that a breach of your protected health information occurs.

## **Amendments to this Privacy Policy**

We reserve the right to revise or amend this Privacy Policy at any time. These revisions or amendments may be made effective for all protected health information we maintain even if created or received prior to the effective date of the revision or amendment. We will provide you with notice of any revisions or amendments to this

Privacy Policy, or changes in the law affecting this Privacy Notice, within 60 days of the effective date of such revision, amendment, or change.

## **On-going Access to Privacy Policy**

We will provide you with a copy of the most recent version of this Privacy Policy at any time upon your written request sent to Step Forward Foot and Ankle's Privacy Officer. For any other requests or for further information regarding the privacy of your protected health information, and for information regarding the filing of a complaint with us, please contact Step Forward Foot and Ankle's Privacy Officer.

## **Contact Information for Step Forward Foot and Ankle's Privacy Officer**

Mail: 18151 BEAR VALLEY RD, HESPERIA, CA 92345

Phone: 760-948-7400