

## **SUMMARY OF PRIVACY PRACTICES**

### **Summary of Privacy Practices**

This Summary of Privacy Practices summarizes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed by the City of Tuscaloosa's HIPAA-covered Health Plans (collectively referred to as the "Plan") in the administration of your claims, and certain rights that you have. For a complete, detailed description of all privacy practices, as well as your legal rights, please refer to the accompanying Notice of Privacy Practices.

### **Our Pledge Regarding Medical Information**

We are committed to protecting your personal health information. We are required by law to (1) make sure that any medical information that identifies you is kept private; (2) provide you with certain rights with respect to your medical information; (3) give you a notice of our legal duties and privacy practices; and (4) follow all privacy practices and procedures currently in effect.

### **How We May Use and Disclose Medical Information About You**

We may use and disclose your personal health information without your permission to facilitate your medical treatment, for payment for any medical treatments, and for any other health care operation. We will disclose your medical information to employees of the City of Tuscaloosa for plan administration functions; but those employees may not share your information for employment-related purposes. We may also use and disclose your personal health information without your permission, as allowed or required by law. Otherwise, we must obtain your written authorization for any other use and disclosure of your medical information. We cannot retaliate against you if you refuse to sign an authorization or revoke an authorization you had previously given.

### **Your Rights Regarding Your Medical Information**

You have the right to inspect and copy your medical information, to request corrections of your medical information, and to obtain an accounting of certain disclosures of your medical information. You also have the right to request that additional restrictions or limitations be placed on the use or disclosure of your medical information, or that communications about your medical information be made in different ways or at different locations.

### **How to File Complaints**

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you have the right to file a complaint with us or with the Office for Civil Rights. We will not retaliate against you for making a complaint.

## **NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES**

**THIS NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.**

Each Plan listed on **Exhibit A** to this Notice (collectively referred to herein as the “Plan”) is sponsored by the City of Tuscaloosa. This Notice of Privacy Practices (the “Notice”) describes the legal obligations of the Plan and your legal rights regarding your protected health information held by the Plan under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (“HIPAA”). Among other things, this Notice describes how your protected health information may be used or disclosed to carry out treatment, payment, or health care operations, or for any other purposes that are permitted or required by law.

We are required to provide this Notice of Privacy Practices to you pursuant to HIPAA.

The HIPAA Privacy Rule protects only certain medical information known as “protected health information.” Generally, protected health information is individually identifiable health information, including demographic information, collected from you or created or received by a health care provider, a health care clearinghouse, a health plan, or your employer on behalf of a group health plan, that relates to:

- (1) your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition;
- (2) the provision of health care to you; or
- (3) the past, present or future payment for the provision of health care to you.

If you have any questions about this Notice or about our privacy practices, please contact the Director of Benefits & Wellness, the Plan’s Privacy Official (contact information below).

### **Effective Date**

The effective date of this Notice is 07/31/2015.

### **OUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

We are required by law to:

- maintain the privacy of your protected health information;
- provide you with certain rights with respect to your protected health information;
- provide you with a copy of this Notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your protected health information; and
- follow the terms of the Notice that is currently in effect.

We reserve the right to change the terms of this Notice and to make new provisions regarding your protected health information that we maintain, as allowed or required by law. If we make any material change to this Notice, we will provide you with a copy of our revised Notice of Privacy Practices by posting a revised copy on our website or by mail to your last-known address on file.

## HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

Under the law, we may use or disclose your protected health information under certain circumstances without your permission. The following categories describe the different ways that we may use and disclose your protected health information. For each category of uses or disclosures we will explain what we mean and present some examples. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed. However, all of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of the categories.

**For Treatment.** We may use or disclose your protected health information to facilitate medical treatment or services by providers. We may disclose medical information about you to providers, including doctors, nurses, technicians, medical students, or other hospital personnel who are involved in taking care of you. For example, we might disclose information about your prior prescriptions to a pharmacist to determine if prior prescriptions contraindicate a pending prescription.

**For Payment.** We may use or disclose your protected health information to determine your eligibility for Plan benefits, to facilitate payment for the treatment and services you receive from health care providers, to determine benefit responsibility under the Plan, or to coordinate Plan coverage. For example, we may tell your health care provider about your medical history to determine whether a particular treatment is experimental, investigational, or medically necessary, or to determine whether the Plan will cover the treatment. We may also share your protected health information with a utilization review or precertification service provider. Likewise, we may share your protected health information with another entity to assist with the adjudication or subrogation of health claims or to another health plan to coordinate benefit payments.

**For Health Care Operations.** We may use and disclose your protected health information for other Plan operations. These uses and disclosures are necessary to run the Plan. For example, we may use medical information in connection with conducting quality assessment and improvement activities; underwriting, premium rating, and other activities relating to Plan coverage; submitting claims for stop-loss (or excess-loss) coverage; conducting or arranging for medical review, legal services, audit services, and fraud & abuse detection programs; business planning and development such as cost management; and business management and general Plan administration activities. However, we are prohibited by law from using or disclosing protected health information that is genetic information for underwriting purposes.

**To Business Associates.** We may contract with individuals or entities known as Business Associates to perform various functions on our behalf or to provide certain types of services. In order to perform these functions or to provide these services, Business Associates will receive, create, maintain, use and/or disclose your protected health information, but only after they agree in writing with us to implement appropriate safeguards regarding your protected health information. For example, we may disclose your protected health information to a Business Associate to administer claims or to provide support services, such as utilization management, pharmacy benefit management or subrogation, but only after the Business Associate enters into a Business Associate contract with us.

**As Required by Law.** We will disclose your protected health information when required to do so by federal, state or local law. For example, we may disclose your protected health information when required by national security laws or public health disclosure laws.

**To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety.** We may use and disclose your protected health information when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety, or the health and safety of the public or another person. Any disclosure, however, would only be to someone able to help prevent the threat. For example, we may disclose your protected health information in a proceeding regarding the licensure of a physician.

**To Plan Sponsors.** For the purpose of administering the plan, we may disclose to certain employees of the City protected health information. However, those employees will only use or disclose that information as necessary to perform plan administration functions or as otherwise required by HIPAA, unless you have authorized further disclosures. Your protected health information cannot be used for employment purposes without your specific authorization.

### **Special Situations:**

In addition to the above, the following categories describe other possible ways that we may use and disclose your protected health information. For each category of uses or disclosures, we will explain what we mean and present some examples. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed. However, all of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of the categories.

**Organ and Tissue Donation.** If you are an organ donor, we may release your protected health information to organizations that handle organ procurement or organ, eye, or tissue transplantation or to an organ donation bank, as necessary to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation.

**Military and Veterans.** If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release your protected health information as required by military command authorities. We may also release protected health information about foreign military personnel to the appropriate foreign military authority.

**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.

**Public Health Risks.** We may disclose your protected health information for public health actions. These actions generally include the following:

- to prevent or control disease, injury, or disability;
- to report births and deaths;
- to report child abuse or neglect;
- to report reactions to medications or problems with products;
- to notify people of recalls of products they may be using;
- to notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition;
- to notify the appropriate government authority if we believe that a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. We will only make this disclosure if you agree, or when required or authorized by law.

**Health Oversight Activities.** We may disclose your protected health information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights laws.

**Lawsuits and Disputes.** If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may disclose your protected health information in response to a court or administrative order. We may also disclose your protected

health information in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.

**Law Enforcement.** We may disclose your protected health information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official—

- in response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons or similar process;
- to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person;
- about the victim of a crime if, under certain limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the victim's agreement;
- about a death that we believe may be the result of criminal conduct; and
- about criminal conduct.

**Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors.** We may release protected health information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death. We may also release medical information about patients to funeral directors, as necessary to carry out their duties.

**National Security and Intelligence Activities.** We may release your protected health information to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law.

**Inmates.** If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or are in the custody of a law enforcement official, we may disclose your protected health information to the correctional institution or law enforcement official if necessary (1) for the institution to provide you with health care; (2) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of others; or (3) for the safety and security of the correctional institution.

**Research.** We may disclose your protected health information to researchers when:

- (1) the individual identifiers have been removed; or
- (2) when an institutional review board or privacy board has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of the requested information, and approves the research.

**Potential Impact of State Law.** In some situations, the federal privacy laws do not preempt (or take precedence over) state privacy laws that give you greater privacy protections. As a result, the privacy laws of a particular state might impose a privacy standard under which we will be required to operate.

#### **Required Disclosures:**

The following is a description of disclosures of your protected health information we are required to make.

**Government Audits.** We are required to disclose your protected health information to the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services when the Secretary is investigating or determining our compliance with the HIPAA privacy rule.

**Disclosures to You.** When you request, we are required to disclose to you the portion of your protected health information that contains medical records, billing records, and any other records used to make decisions regarding your health care benefits. We are also required, when requested, to provide you with an accounting of most disclosures of your protected health information if the disclosure was for reasons other than for payment, treatment, or health care operations, and if the protected health information was not disclosed pursuant to your individual authorization.

**Other Disclosures:**

**Personal Representatives.** We will disclose your protected health information to individuals authorized by you, or to an individual designated as your personal representative, attorney-in-fact, etc., so long as you provide us with a written notice/authorization and any supporting documents (i.e., power of attorney). Note: Under the HIPAA privacy rule, we do not have to disclose information to a personal representative if we have a reasonable belief that:

- (1) you have been, or may be, subjected to domestic violence, abuse or neglect by such person; or
- (2) treating such person as your personal representative could endanger you; and
- (3) in the exercise of professional judgment, it is not in your best interest to treat the person as your personal representative.

**Spouses and Other Family Members.** With only limited exceptions, we will send all mail to the employee. This includes mail relating to the employee's spouse and other family members who are covered under the Plan, and includes mail with information on the use of Plan benefits by the employee's spouse and other family members and information on the denial of any Plan benefits to the employee's spouse and other family members. If a person covered under the Plan has requested Restrictions or Confidential Communications (see below under "Your Rights"), and if we have agreed to the request, we will send mail as provided by the request for Restrictions or Confidential Communications.

**Authorizations.** Other uses or disclosures of your protected health information not described above will only be made with your written authorization. You may revoke written authorization at any time, so long as the revocation is in writing. Once we receive your written revocation, it will only be effective for future uses and disclosures. It will not be effective for any information that may have been used or disclosed in reliance upon the written authorization and prior to receiving your written revocation.

**Below are some of the circumstances when we may use and disclose your medical information only with your authorization:**

**Psychotherapy Notes.** With limited exceptions, your authorization is required for use or disclosure of psychotherapy notes, which are notes recorded by a mental health professional documenting the contents of a conversation during a private counseling session or a group, joint, or family counseling session and that are separated from the rest of your medical record.

**Marketing.** With limited exceptions, your authorization is required for use or disclosure of your medical information for marketing purposes.

**Sale of Your Medical Information.** Your authorization is required if we want to sell your medical information.

### **YOUR RIGHTS**

You have the following rights with respect to your protected health information:

**Right to Inspect and Copy.** You have the right to inspect and copy certain protected health information that may be used to make decisions about your health care benefits. To inspect and copy your protected health information, you must submit your request in writing to the Privacy Official. If you request a copy of the information, we may charge a reasonable fee for the costs of copying, mailing, or other supplies associated with your request.

We may deny your request to inspect and copy in certain very limited circumstances. If you are denied access to your medical information, you may request that the denial be reviewed by submitting a written request to the Privacy Official.

**Right to Amend.** If you feel that the protected health information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for the Plan.

To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to the Privacy Official. In addition, you must provide a reason that supports your request.

We may deny your request for an amendment if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support the request. In addition, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that:

- is not part of the medical information kept by or for the Plan;
- was not created by us, unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment;
- is not part of the information that you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or
- is already accurate and complete.

If we deny your request, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us and any future disclosures of the disputed information will include your statement.

**Right to an Accounting of Disclosures.** You have the right to request an “accounting” of certain disclosures of your protected health information. The accounting will not include (1) disclosures for purposes of treatment, payment, or health care operations; (2) disclosures made to you; (3) disclosures made pursuant to your authorization; (4) disclosures made to friends or family in your presence or because of an emergency; (5) disclosures for national security purposes; and (6) disclosures incidental to otherwise permissible disclosures.

To request this list or accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to the Privacy Official. Your request must state a time period of no longer than six (6) years from the date of your request. Your request should indicate in what form you want the list (for example, paper or electronic). The first list you request within a 12-month period will be provided free of charge. For additional lists, we

may charge you for the costs of providing the list. We will notify you of the cost involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at that time before any costs are incurred.

You may also request and receive an accounting of disclosures of electronic health records made for treatment, payment, or health care operations during the prior three years for disclosures made on or after (1) January 1, 2014 for electronic health records acquired before January 1, 2009; or (2) January 1, 2011 for electronic health records acquired on or after January 1, 2009.

**Right to Request Restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on your protected health information that we use or disclose for treatment, payment, or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on your protected health information that we disclose to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, such as a family member or friend. For example, you could ask that we not use or disclose information about a surgery that you had.

Except as provided in the next paragraph, we are not required to agree to your request. However, if we do agree to the request, we will honor the restriction until you revoke it or we notify you.

We will comply with any restriction request if (1) except as otherwise required by law, the disclosure is to the health plan for purposes of carrying out payment or health care operations (and is not for purposes of carrying out treatment); and (2) the protected health information pertains solely to a health care item or service for which the health care provider involved has been paid out-of-pocket in full.

To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to the Privacy Official. In your request, you must tell us (1) what information you want to limit; (2) whether you want to limit our use, disclosure, or both; and (3) to whom you want the limits to apply—for example, disclosures to your spouse.

**Right to Request Confidential Communications.** You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you at work or by mail.

To request confidential communications, you must make your request in writing to the Privacy Official. We will not ask you the reason for your request. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted. We will accommodate all reasonable requests if you clearly provide information that the disclosure of all or part of your protected information could endanger you.

**Right to Be Notified of a Breach.** You have the right to be notified in the event that we (or a Business Associate) discover a breach of unsecured protected health information.

**Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice.** You have the right to a paper copy of this notice. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. Even if you have agreed to receive this notice electronically, you are still entitled to a paper copy of this notice.

You may obtain a copy of this notice at our website,  
<http://www.tuscaloosa.com/Government/Departments/Human-Resources/benefits>.

To obtain a paper copy of this notice, please call the Privacy Official (contact information below).

### COMPLAINTS

If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with the Plan or with the Office for Civil Rights of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. To file a

complaint with the Plan, contact the Privacy Official [contact information below]. All complaints must be submitted in writing.

You will not be penalized, or in any other way retaliated against, for filing a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights or with us.

**Privacy Official Contact Information**

Name of Privacy Official: Kellie Austell, Director of Benefits & Wellness  
Office Address: City of Tuscaloosa, Alabama  
P.O. Box 2089  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401  
ATTN: HIPAA Privacy Official  
Office Telephone Number: 205-248-5230  
Office E-mail: [kaustell@tuscaloosa.com](mailto:kaustell@tuscaloosa.com)

**Exhibit A**

The following health plans are subject to the City of Tuscaloosa’s Notice of Privacy Practices:

1. Health/Medical Insurance Plan (administered by BCBS)
2. Health Flexible Spending Account Program (administered by BCBS)
3. Employee Assistance Program (administered by DCH EAPs)
4. \_\_\_\_\_

The list shall be deemed to include (1) replacement plans which differ by name, (2) additional health plans of a similar nature (self-funded or insured where the City has access to PHI) or (3) any other plan that is, under applicable law, required to maintain A Notice of Privacy Practices. This list may be updated from time to time by the Privacy Official.

\*The HIPAA-covered Health Plans listed above have been designated as an Affiliated Covered Entity (as defined in HIPAA) and are, therefore, considered one HIPAA covered entity for purposes of this Notice of Privacy Practices.