

UVM Rescue

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

PURPOSE

This privacy statement complies with the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). We have designed this statement to provide information about how we will protect your health information and your rights as a patient. Protection of your health information is something UVM Rescue has taken care to maintain in our 30-plus years of operation. This recent federal guideline merely formalizes the process and presents a clearer explanation of what happens to your medical and billing information.

THIS NOTICE MUST ANSWER A FEW SIMPLE QUESTIONS

- ~What is PHI?
- ~How can UVM Rescue legally use your PHI?
- ~Who will see and use your medical records?
- ~What are your rights as a patient?
- ~What uses will require your specific authorization?

WHAT IS PHI?

HIPAA regulations refer to Protected Health Information (PHI) as written information in the form of patient care reports (PCR) and notes, billing information, and verbal communication regarding a patient's treatment and assessment. Examples include name, social security number, address, diagnosis, treatment, medical history and billing records. Consistent with the Federal Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), UVM Rescue enforces strict regulations on maintaining patient confidentiality.

HOW CAN UVM RESCUE LEGALLY USE YOUR PHI?

In all situations, all members and approved observers of UVM Rescue **may not release** any aspect of a patient's PHI unless it relates to treatment, payment or operations outlined in the HIPAA regulation. Each member of UVM Rescue shall work to ensure that patient confidentiality is protected during, and long after, a patient has been transferred to hospital staff or refused treatment.

WHO WILL SEE AND USE YOUR MEDICAL RECORDS?

Treatment is defined as the act of transferring assessment and treatment information to other providers directly involved in the patients care. For example, it is acceptable to report information obtained from our care to emergency room workers who will be directly caring for the patient. It is also appropriate to relay this information to the radio room staff in the form of a radio report on the HEAR frequency, landline, or cellular phone.

Payment includes the functions of revenue recovery. UVM Rescue bills insurance companies and patients for the services it renders to offset the costs associated with providing these services. We have set our billing rates to allow us to serve the public without creating an unreasonable burden to our patients. We are authorized to release PHI to our billing agent. They are also bound by HIPAA regulations and may only share PHI with the patient's insurance company or other related agencies.

Operational functions such as quality assurance, complaint research, compliance with court order or subpoena, requests made by the FDA or other federal or state agencies, etc. are permitted uses of PHI. The most common use of PHI for operational purposes is quality assurance (QA). UVM Rescue members improve future patient care through careful review of previous calls, adherence to protocols, trends, and identification of training needs, among other criteria. The QA committee uses PHI in strict compliance with HIPAA. HIPAA also permits us to release PHI if it will be used to prevent or lessen an imminent threat to the health or safety of an individual or to the public. Unless one of the previous conditions occurs, UVM Rescue will protect your information as we have always done. We take great pride in our patient care and advocacy.

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS AS A PATIENT?

All patients have specific rights under the new HIPAA regulations that UVM Rescue wholly supports. Each patient that is transported by UVM Rescue or refuses care has the:

Right to notice of privacy practices- This document is our Notice of Privacy Practices. Each patient assessed by UVM Rescue must receive a copy of this notice. The pamphlet explains our confidentiality policies and outlines our use of your PHI.

Right to access records- You have the right to request a copy of your PHI. This includes our patient care report (PCR) and billing information. All requests for PHI should be made in writing to:

**UVM Rescue
ATTN: Director of Operations
284 East Ave. Suite #1
Burlington, VT 05401**

Patients must indicate their desire to release their PHI in a signed letter. The PHI Release Agreement states that all PHI released will only be used at the patient's expressed request.

Right to request amendment of record- You have the right to amend your PHI. We reserve the right to refuse to edit information we believe is correct.

Right to accounting disclosures- You have the right to ask us how we have used and disclosed your PHI. Written requests for such accounting will receive a response from the Privacy Officer within 30 days.

Right to request restriction on use and disclosure of PHI- You have the right to request us to restrict the use and disclosure of PHI to carry out treatment, payment, or health care operations. We are not required to agree to any requested restriction

Right to request communications by alternative means- we are able to transmit information by email, fax and U.S. mail at your request. All communication will be in confidence.

Right to file complaints- We are always evaluating ourselves in order to find ways to improve patient care. One such way is through our Patient Satisfaction Surveys that may be forwarded to you at your request. In addition, you have the right to contact the Department of Health and Human Services to file a complaint.

Press releases- No member or observer of UVM Rescue is permitted to make statements to the press regarding PHI. All inquiries from the press will be forwarded to the Director of Operations.

WHAT USES WILL REQUIRE THE PATIENT'S SPECIFIC AUTHORIZATION

Any uses not related to treatment, payment, or operations require your specific authorization. The Privacy Officer will contact you in writing should the need arise to disclose any PHI not directly related to treatment, payment, or operations.

CONTACT US

Please refer any billing inquiries to Mariette Shepherd at (802) 656-0970. You can contact UVM Rescue Headquarters at any time by calling (802) 656-4287. We also have a webpage at www.uvm.edu/~rescue and an email address at rescue@uvm.edu. Our fax number is (802) 656-8077.