

## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

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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. THE PRIVACY OF YOUR MEDICAL INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT TO US.

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### **Our Privacy Promise**

We will keep your medical information private. We will also give you this notice about our privacy practices, our legal duties and your rights concerning your medical information. We will follow the privacy practices that we describe in this notice while it is in effect. This notice took effect April 14, 2003, and will remain in effect until it is changed or replaced.

We reserve the right to change our privacy practices and the terms of this notice at any time, as long as the law allows. We reserve the right to make these changes effective for all medical information that we keep, including medical information we created or received before we made the changes. Before we make a significant change in our privacy practices, we will change this notice accordingly and send the new notice to you prior to the effective date of the change.

You may request a copy of this notice at any time or view a copy on our Web site at [www.CompanionLife.com](http://www.CompanionLife.com).

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### **Uses and Disclosures of Medical Information**

#### **Treatment, Payment, Health Care Operations**

We may use and disclose your medical information for purposes of treatment, payment and health care operations. For example:

Treatment: We may disclose your medical information to a physician or other health care professional so they can treat you.

Payment: We may use and/or disclose your medical information for these and other related activities:

- To pay claims from physicians, hospitals and other health care professionals for covered services you received.
- To determine your eligibility for benefits.
- To coordinate those benefits.
- To determine medical necessity.
- To obtain premiums.
- To issue explanations of benefits to the named insured.

We may also disclose your medical information to a health care professional or entity that is bound by the federal Privacy Rules so they can obtain payment or engage in payment activities.

Health Care Operations: We may use and/or disclose your medical information in the normal course of our health care operations. This includes:

- Determining our risk and premiums for your health plan.
- Quality assessment and improvement activities.
- Reviewing the qualifications of health care professionals; evaluating practitioner and provider performance; conducting training programs; and accreditation, certification, licensing and credentialing activities.
- Medical review, legal services and auditing, including fraud and abuse detection and compliance programs.
- Business planning and development.
- Business management and general administrative activities, including management activities relating to privacy, customer service, internal grievances and creating de-identified information or a limited data set.

We may disclose your medical information to another entity, which has a relationship with you and is also bound by the federal Privacy Rules, for its health care operations relating to quality assessment and improvement activities, reviewing the competence or qualifications of health care professionals, or detecting or preventing health care fraud and abuse.

### **Your Authorization**

You may give us written authorization to use your medical information or to disclose it to anyone for any purpose. You may revoke your authorization in writing at any time. However, this will not affect any uses and disclosures we made while your authorization was in effect. Without your written authorization, we will not use or disclose your medical information for any reason except those described in this notice.

### **Your Family and Friends**

We may disclose your medical information to a family member, friend or other person to the extent necessary for them to assist with your health care, or with payment for your health care. We may also use or disclose your medical information to notify (or help notify, including identifying and locating) a family member, a personal representative or other person responsible for your care of your location, general condition or death.

Before we disclose your medical information to that person, we will give you a chance to object to us doing so. If you are not available, or if you are incapacitated or in an emergency situation, we will disclose your medical information based on our professional judgment of what would be in your best interest.

### **Your Employer or Organization Sponsoring Your Group Health Plan**

We may disclose summary information about you to your employer or plan sponsor for two reasons. One is to get premium bids for the health insurance coverage offered through your group health plan. The second is to decide whether to modify, amend or terminate your group health plan. The summary information we may disclose summarizes claims history, claims expenses or types of claims members of your group health plan have filed. The summary information will not include demographic information about the people in the group health plan,

but your employer or plan sponsor may be able to identify you or others from the summary information.

### **Underwriting**

We may receive your medical information for underwriting, premium rating or other activities necessary to create, renew or replace a contract of health insurance or health benefits. We will not use or further disclose this medical information for any other purpose (except as required by law) unless the contract of health insurance or health benefits is placed with us, in which case we will use and disclose your medical information as described in this notice.

### **Disaster Relief**

We may use or disclose your medical information to a public or private entity authorized by law or by its charter to assist in disaster relief efforts.

### **Public Benefit**

We may use or disclose your medical information as authorized by law for the following purposes that are in the public interest or benefit:

- As required by law.
- For public health activities, including disease and vital statistics reporting, child abuse reporting, FDA oversight, and to employers regarding work-related illness or injury.
- To report adult abuse, neglect or domestic violence.
- To health oversight agencies.
- In response to court and administrative orders and other lawful processes.
- To law enforcement officials in response to subpoenas and other lawful processes concerning crime victims, suspicious deaths, crimes on our premises, reporting crimes in emergencies and to identify or locate a suspect or other person.
- To coroners, medical examiners and funeral directors.
- To organ procurement organizations.
- To avert a serious threat to health or safety.
- In connection with certain research activities.
- To the military and to federal officials for lawful intelligence, counterintelligence and national security activities.
- To correctional institutions regarding inmates.
- As authorized by state workers' compensation laws.

### **Health-Related Services**

We may use your medical information to contact you about health-related benefits and services, or about treatment alternatives. We may disclose your medical information to a business associate to assist us in these activities.

### **Marketing**

We may use or disclose your medical information to encourage you to purchase or use a product or service by face-to-face communication, or to provide you with promotional gifts of nominal value.

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## **Individual Rights**

### **Access**

You have the right to inspect or get copies of your medical information, with some exceptions. You may request that we provide copies in a format other than photocopies. We will use the format you request unless it is not practical to do so. To get your medical information, you must make a request in writing. If you request copies, we will charge you \$0.50 for each page and for staff time to copy your medical information. We also will charge for postage if you want us to mail the copies to you. If you request another format, we will charge a cost-based fee for providing your medical information in that format. Contact us using the information listed at the end of this notice for a full explanation of our fees.

### **Disclosure Accounting**

You have the right to request, in writing, to receive a list of instances in which we (or our business associates) disclosed your medical information for purposes other than treatment, payment and health care operations, or as authorized by you, or for certain other activities allowed by law, on or after April 14, 2003. We will provide you with the date on which we made each disclosure, the name of the person or entity to which we disclosed your medical information, a description of the medical information we disclosed and the reason for the disclosure. If you request this accounting more than once in a 12-month period, we may charge you a reasonable, cost-based fee for each additional request. Contact us using the information listed at the end of this notice for a full explanation of our fees.

### **Restriction**

You have the right to request, in writing, that we place additional restrictions on our use or disclosure of your medical information. We are not required to agree to these additional restrictions, but if we do, we will abide by our agreement (except in an emergency). Any agreement to additional restrictions must be in writing signed by a person authorized to make such an agreement for us. We will not be bound unless our agreement is in writing.

### **Confidential Communications**

You have the right to request, in writing, that we communicate with you about your medical information by other means, or to other locations. You must state that you could be in danger if we do not communicate to you in confidence. We must accommodate your request if it is reasonable, if it specifies the other means or location, and if it permits us to continue to collect premiums and pay claims under your health plan. This includes sending explanations of benefits to the named insured of your health plan. We will not be bound to your confidential communications request unless our agreement is in writing.

Even though you requested that we communicate with you about your health care in confidence, an explanation of benefits issued to the named insured for health care that the named insured (or others covered by the health plan) received might contain sufficient information, such as deductible and out-of-pocket amounts, to reveal that you obtained health care for which we paid.

**Amendment**

You have the right to request, in writing, that we amend your medical information. Your request must explain why we should amend the information. We may deny your request if we did not create the information you want amended and the person or entity that did create it is available, or we may deny your request for certain other reasons. If we deny your request, we will send you a written explanation.

You may respond with a statement of disagreement that we will add to the information you wanted to amend. If we accept your request to amend the information, we will make reasonable efforts to inform others of the amendment, including people you name, and to include the changes in any future disclosures of that information.

**Electronic Notice**

If you are viewing this notice on our Web site or by electronic mail (e-mail), you may request this notice in written form by using the information listed at the end of this notice.

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**Questions and Complaints**

If you want more information about our privacy practices, or if you have questions or concerns, please contact us using the information below.

If you think that we may have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we made about your privacy rights, you may tell us using the contact information listed below. You also may submit a written complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. We will provide you with that address upon request.

We support your right to the privacy of your medical information. We will not retaliate in any way if you choose to file a complaint with us or with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Contact Information**

Companion Life  
Bruce Honeycutt, Privacy Officer  
I-20 @ Alpine Road (AX-E01)  
Columbia, SC 29219

(803) 264-7258 (telephone)

(803) 264-7257 (fax)