

## How to Complain about Privacy Practices

If you think NVCSS may have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we made about access to your PHI, you may file a complaint with the appropriate NVCSS County Director.

If your complaint does not get resolved, or if you have questions about this Notice, please contact the NVCSS Compliance Officer at:

Northern Valley Catholic Social Service, Inc.  
2400 Washington Avenue  
Redding, CA 96001-2832  
Phone: 530-241-0552

You may also file a written complaint with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, 50 United Nations Plaza, Room 322, San Francisco, CA 94102, or call 800-368-1019. NVCSS will take no retaliatory action against you if you make such complaints.

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### Client Acknowledgement:

I have received a copy of this Notice of Privacy Practices and understand its contents.

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Client Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Comments (why, if client did not sign):

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Staff Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Effective Date:  
This notice is effective on April 14, 2003

Revision Dates: 03/28/03  
02/05/09



# Notice of Privacy Practices

**This Notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can access this information. Please review this Notice carefully.**

NVCSS may not require individuals to surrender any of their rights under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) as a condition of the provision of treatment, payment, and enrollment in a health plan, or eligibility of benefits.

## The NVCSS Duty to Safeguard your Protected Health Information (PHI)

Your health information is personal and private. Individually identifiable information about your past, present, or future health or condition, the provision of health care to you, or payment for health care is considered "Protected Health Information" (PHI). We are required to extend certain protections to your PHI, and to give you this Notice about our privacy practices that explains how, when, and why we may use or disclose your PHI. Except in specified circumstances, we must use or disclose only the minimum necessary PHI to accomplish the intended purpose of the use or disclosure.

We are required to follow the privacy practices described in this Notice although **we reserve the right to change our privacy practices and the terms of this Notice at any time.**

If we do make changes, you may request a copy of the new Notice from any Northern Valley Catholic Social Service office. It is also posted on our website at:

<http://www.nvcss.org>

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## How NVCSS may use and disclose your Protected Health Information (PHI)

NVCSS may use and disclose protected health information (PHI) for a variety of reasons. We have a limited right to use and/or disclose your PHI for purposes of treatment, payment, and for health care operations. For uses beyond that, we must have your written authorization unless the law permits or requires us to make the use or disclosure without your authorization. If we disclose your PHI to an outside entity in order for that entity to perform a function on our behalf, we must have in place an agreement from the outside entity that it will extend the same degree of privacy protection to your information that we must apply to your PHI. However, the law provides that we are permitted to make some uses or disclosures without your consent or authorization. The following describes and offers examples of our potential uses or disclosures of your PHI.

## Uses and Disclosures relating to Treatment, Payment, or Health Care Operations

Generally, NVCSS may use or disclose your PHI as follows:

**For Treatment:** We may disclose your PHI to clinical staff, case managers, doctors, nurses, and other health care personnel who are involved in providing your care. For example, your PHI will be shared among members of your treatment team. Your PHI may also be shared with outside entities performing ancillary services relating to your treatment, such as lab work or for consultation purposes with others involved in the provision or coordination of your care.

**To obtain Payment:** We may use or disclose your PHI in order to bill and collect payment for your health care services. For example, we may contact your employer to verify employment status, and/or release portions of your PHI to the Medi-Cal program, and/or a private insurer to get paid for services that we delivered to you.

**For Health Care Operations:** We may use or disclose your PHI in the course of operating our health program. For example, we may use your PHI in evaluating the quality of services provided, or disclose your PHI to our accountant or attorney for audit purposes. Release of your PHI to the state agencies might also be necessary to determine your eligibility for publicly funded services.

**Appointment Reminders:** Unless you provide us with alternative instructions, we may call or send appointment reminders and other similar materials to your home.

**Treatment Alternatives:** We may tell you about or recommend possible treatment options or choices that may be of interest to you.

**Health-Related Benefits and Services:** We may tell you about health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you, such as free medical exams or food programs.

## Uses and Disclosures of PHI requiring Authorization

For uses and disclosures beyond treatment, payment, and operations purposes we are required to have your written authorization, unless the use or disclosure falls within one of the exceptions described below. Authorizations can be revoked at any time by you to stop future uses or disclosures except to the extent that we have already undertaken an action in reliance upon your authorization.

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## Uses and Disclosures of PHI not requiring Consent or Authorization

The law provides that we may use or disclose your PHI without consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

**When required by Law:** We may disclose PHI when a law requires that we report information about suspected abuse, neglect or domestic violence, or related to suspected criminal activity, or in response to a court order. We must also disclose PHI to authorities who monitor compliance with these privacy requirements.

**For Public Health Activities:** We may disclose PHI when we are required to collect information about disease or injury, or to report vital statistics to the public health authority.

**For Health Oversight Activities:** We may disclose PHI to the protection and advocacy agency, or another agency responsible for monitoring the mental health care system for such purposes as reporting or investigation of unusual incidents, and monitoring of the Medi-Cal program.

**Relating to Decedents:** We may disclose PHI related to a death to coroners, medical examiners, or funeral directors, and to organ procurement organizations relating to organ, eye or tissue donations or transplants.

**For Research Purposes:** In certain circumstances and under supervision of a privacy board, we may disclose PHI to staff and their designees in order to assist research.

**To avert Threat to Health or Safety:** In order to avoid a serious threat to health or safety, we may disclose PHI as necessary to law enforcement or other persons who can reasonably prevent or lessen the threat of harm.

**For Specific Government Functions:** We may disclose PHI to the military in certain situations, to correctional facilities in certain situations, to government benefit programs relating to eligibility and enrollment, and to authorities for national security reasons, such as for the protection of the President.

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## Uses and Disclosures of PHI from Alcohol and Other Drug Records not requiring Consent or Authorization

The law provides that we may use/disclose PHI from alcohol and other drug records without consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

**When Required by Law:** We may disclose PHI when a law requires that we report information about suspected child abuse and neglect, or when a crime has been committed on the program premises or against program personnel, or in response to a court order.

**Relating to Decedents:** We may disclose PHI related to an individual's death, if state or federal law requires the information for collection of vital statistics or inquiry into the cause of death.

**For Research, Audit or Evaluation Purposes:** In certain circumstances, NVCSS may disclose PHI for research, audit or evaluation purposes.

**To Avert Threat to Health or Safety:** In order to avoid a serious threat to health or safety, NVCSS may disclose PHI to law enforcement when a threat is made to commit a crime on the program premises or against program personnel.

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## Uses and Disclosures requiring you to have an Opportunity to Object

NVCSS may disclose a limited amount of your PHI if we inform you about the disclosure in advance, and you do not object or you are given the opportunity to opt out of future disclosure, as long as the disclosure is not otherwise prohibited by law.

Examples of activities requiring you to have an opportunity to object:

**Fundraising:** We may use or disclose limited information about you for our own fundraising purposes, but we must allow you the opportunity to opt out of future fundraising activities.

**To Families, Friends or Others involved in your Care:** NVCSS may disclose information about your location, general condition, or death to your family or other individuals who are responsible for your care if NVCSS has your approval, or in the case of an emergency or your incapacity. Only the minimum necessary amount of information will be disclosed.

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## Your Rights regarding your Protected Health Information (PHI)

You have the following rights relating to your protected health information:

**To request Restrictions on Uses/Disclosures:** You have the right to ask that NVCSS limits how we use or disclose your PHI. We will consider your request, but are not legally bound to agree to the restriction. To the extent that we do agree to any restrictions on our use/disclosure of your PHI, we will put the agreement in writing and abide by it except in emergency situations. We cannot agree to limit uses/disclosures that are required by law.

**To choose how We contact You:** You have the right to ask that we send you information at an alternative address or by an alternative means, such as e-mail. We must agree to your request as long as it is reasonably easy for us to do so.

**To inspect and request a Copy of your PHI:** Unless your access to your records is restricted for clear and documented treatment reasons, you have a right to see your protected health information upon your written request. We will respond to your request within 5 days. If we deny your access, we will give you written reasons for the denial and explain any right to have the denial reviewed. If you want copies of your PHI, a charge for copying may be imposed, depending on your circumstances. You have a right to choose what portions of your information are copied and to have prior information regarding the cost of copying.

**To request Amendment of your PHI:** If you believe that there is a mistake or missing information in our record of your PHI, you may request, in writing, that we correct or add to your record. We will respond within 5 days of receiving your request. We may deny the request if we determine that the PHI is: (1) correct and complete, (2) not created by us and/or not part of our records, or (3) not permitted to be disclosed. Any denial will state the reasons for denial and explain your rights to have the request and denial, along with any statement in response that you provide, appended to your PHI. If we approved the request for amendment, we will change the PHI and so inform you, and tell you others who need to know about the change in your PHI.

**To find out what Disclosures have been made:** You have a right to get a list of when, to whom, for what purpose, and what content of your PHI has been released except for instances of disclosure for treatment, payment, and operations, or PHI given to you, your family, or the facility directory, or pursuant to your written authorization. The list also will not include any disclosures made for national security purposes, to law enforcement officials or correctional facilities, or disclosures made before April 14, 2003. NVCSS will respond to your written request for such a list within 30 days of receiving it. Your request can relate to disclosures going as far back as six years. There will be no charge for up to one such request each year. There may be a charge for more frequent requests.

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## Nondiscrimination Notice

Northern Valley Catholic Social Service, Inc. adheres to an equal opportunity policy for all persons seeking admission and treatment as clients. The agency does not discriminate due to race, color, religion, sex, age, marital status, sexual preference, political affiliation, physical or mental disability, ancestry or national origin.

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## You have the Right to receive this Notice

You have a right to receive a paper copy of this Notice from any NVCSS office, and/or an electronic copy by email upon request. It is also posted on the NVCSS website:

<http://www.nvcss.org>