



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.

Bigfork Valley's duties

By law, Bigfork Valley Hospital, Clinics and Communities must keep protected health information private. The federal government defines protected health information as any information, whether oral, electronic or paper, which is created or received by Bigfork Valley and relates to a patient's health care or payment for the provision of medical services. This includes not only the results of tests and notes written by doctors, nurses and other clinical personnel, but also certain demographic information (such as your name, address and telephone number) that is related to your health records.

Bigfork Valley is required by law to give you this notice and to follow the terms and conditions of the notice that is currently in effect.

How Bigfork Valley fulfills these duties

- Bigfork Valley considers patient privacy as part of its mission to serve the needs of the patient first.
- Bigfork Valley takes necessary precautions against inappropriate use or disclosure of medical information.
- Bigfork Valley employees are expected to access medical information only as necessary to perform their jobs.
- Bigfork Valley employees who violate these rules and policies are subject to sanctions, including discipline and termination.

The Health Care Providers Covered By This Notice

This notice covers Bigfork Valley and Bigfork Valley personnel, volunteers, students, and trainees. The notice also covers other health care providers that come to Bigfork Valley to care for patients (such as physicians, physician assistants, therapists, and other health care providers not employed by Bigfork Valley, unless these other health care providers give you their own notice of privacy practices that describes how they will protect your medical information. Bigfork Valley may share your medical information with these other health care providers for their treatment, payment and health care operations. This arrangement is only for sharing information and not for any other purpose.

A Word about Federal and State Law

Federal and state laws require Bigfork Valley to protect your medical information and federal law requires Bigfork Valley to describe to you how we handle that information. When federal and state privacy laws differ, and the state law is more protective of your information or provides you with greater access to your information, then state law will override federal law.

Part I - Most Common Uses and Disclosures

This section describes the most common circumstances in which Bigfork Valley may use or disclose protected health information.

Treatment

Bigfork Valley will use and disclose protected health information to provide, coordinate or manage your care. This includes communication and consultation between health care providers - doctors, nurses, technicians and other members of your medical team. This applies to disclosures for treatment purposes to health care providers both within and outside of Bigfork Valley. For example, following orthopaedic surgery, your doctor may refer you for rehabilitation. Information will be shared between caregivers to ensure continuity of care.

Additional Applicable State Law Requirements

Minnesota law generally requires patient consent for disclosures of protected health information by Bigfork Valley for treatment purposes, unless the disclosure is to a Bigfork Valley-related entity or consent is not possible due to a medical emergency.

Payment

Bigfork Valley will use and disclose protected health information to create bills and collect payment from insurance companies, Medicare and other payers. This may include providing information such as dates of service, symptoms and diagnosis to your insurance company to show that Bigfork Valley provided medical services to you. Bigfork Valley also may disclose protected health information to another health care provider if such information is needed by the other health care provider to obtain payment for medical services provided to you.

Healthcare operations

Bigfork Valley will use and disclose protected health information if it is necessary to improve the quality of care we provide to patients or to run our health care facilities. These include activities to monitor and improve patient care, license staff to care for patients, prepare for state and federal regulatory reviews, train health care and non-health care professionals, manage health care operations and improve health care services. Here are some examples:

- To reduce the infection rate after a surgery, it would be necessary to look at medical records to determine the rate of infections that occurred.
- To be licensed to do a certain procedure, a doctor may be required to show that he or she has successfully completed a number of procedures under the supervision of another physician.
- A Federal Drug Administration inspector may review patient records in a laboratory to ensure that accurate and complete records are maintained for patient safety.

Bigfork Valley also may disclose protected health information to another health care provider who has treated you, or to your insurance company, if such information is needed for certain health care operations of the health care provider or insurance company, such as quality improvement activities, evaluations of health care professionals, and state and federal regulatory reviews.

Patient contacts

At times, Bigfork Valley may access information, such as your name, address and general medical condition to contact you to:

- set up or remind you about future appointments;
- disclose health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

Philanthropy

The Bigfork Valley Community Foundation may contact you to raise funds to sustain the mission of the Northern Itasca Hospital District. For example, you may receive letters or other publications asking you to consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the Bigfork Valley Community Foundation. When conducting fundraising activities, the Bigfork Valley Community Foundation may access only your basic demographic information (such as name and contact information) and the dates that you were treated at Bigfork Valley. Bigfork Valley does not sell or rent patients' names or addresses to any organization outside of Bigfork Valley.

Bigfork Valley may disclose relevant protected health information to a family member or friend who is involved with your care. We find that many patients want us to discuss their care with their family members and others to keep them up-to-date on your care, to help you understand your care, to help in handling your bills, or to help in the scheduling of your appointments. In a disaster situation, we also may disclose relevant protected health information to disaster relief organizations to help locate your family members or friends or to inform them of your location, condition or death. If family members or friends are present while care is being provided, Bigfork Valley will assume your companions may hear the discussion, unless you state otherwise. If you do not want Bigfork Valley to disclose your protected health information to your family members or others who are involved with your care or handling your bills, please inform the person assisting you during registration and/or admission.

Medical Research

Medical research is vital to the advancement of medical science. Federal regulations permit use of protected health information in medical research, either with your authorization or when the research study at Bigfork Valley is reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board before any medical research study begins. In some situations, limited information may be used before approval of the research study to allow a researcher to determine whether enough patients exist to make a study scientifically valid.

Additional Applicable State Law Requirements

Minnesota law generally requires patient consent for disclosures of protected health information to entities to outside researchers for medical research purposes. Bigfork Valley will obtain such consent from their patients or refusal to participate in any research study, or will make a good faith effort to obtain such consent or refusal, before releasing any identifiable information to an outside researcher for research purposes.

Part II Other Potential Uses and Disclosures

This section describes the less common circumstances in which Bigfork Valley may use or disclose protected health information.

To Avert a Serious Threat of Harm

Bigfork Valley may use and disclose protected health information to alert those able to prevent or lessen a serious and immediate threat to the health or safety of a patient, another person or the public.

Tissue Donation

If Bigfork Valley professionals determine that a patient might be a candidate tissue or eye donation, Bigfork Valley may release protected health information to organizations that handle, eye and tissue donation banks, or other health care organizations as needed to make tissue donation and transplantation possible.

Military Personnel

If a patient is a member of the United States Armed Forces, Bigfork Valley may release protected health information as required by military authorities. Bigfork Valley also may release protected health information about foreign military personnel to the appropriate foreign military authority. When the military organization is sponsoring the medical evaluation, the patient's medical information is shared with both the patient and the sponsoring organization. Patients being evaluated on behalf of the military should be aware of these arrangements.

Additional Applicable State Law Requirements

Minnesota law generally requires patient consent for disclosures of protected health information by Bigfork Valley for the military purposes referenced above, unless the disclosure is specifically required by federal law.

Workers' Compensation

Bigfork Valley may disclose protected health information for workers' compensation or similar programs as authorized or required by law. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

Public Health Purposes

Bigfork Valley may disclose protected health information for public health purposes. The following are some examples of releases that are allowed for public health purposes:

- to report vital statistics (e.g., births, deaths);
- to report to the federal government adverse reactions to medication or safety problems with FDA-regulated products;
- to notify people of product recalls and
- to report communicable diseases to local, county, state, and federal health officials.

Health Oversight Activities

Bigfork Valley may disclose protected health information to health oversight agencies that oversee our operations or personnel. For example, Bigfork Valley may need to disclose protected health information to the state agencies that oversee our health care facilities or licensed health care personnel (e.g., Department of Health, Medical Board, Nursing Board), or the federal agencies that oversee Medicare. These agencies need such information to monitor our compliance with state and federal laws.

Lawsuits and Other Judicial Proceedings

Bigfork Valley may disclose protected health information in response to a valid court or administrative order. Bigfork Valley also may disclose protected health information in response to certain types of subpoenas, discovery requests or other lawful process.

Law Enforcement Activities

Bigfork Valley may disclose protected health information to law enforcement officials. For example, we may release protected health information to law enforcement officials:

- in response to a valid court order, grand jury subpoena, or search warrant;
- to identify a suspect, fugitive or missing person;
- about the victim of a crime under certain limited circumstances;
- about a death believed to be a result of criminal conduct or
- about a crime committed on Bigfork Valley premises.

Additional Applicable State Law Requirements

Minnesota law generally requires patient consent for disclosures of protected health information by Bigfork Valley for law enforcement purposes, unless the disclosure is in response to a valid court order or warrant.

Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors

Bigfork Valley may release protected health information to a coroner or medical examiner when necessary to identify the deceased, determine the cause of death or as otherwise authorized by law. Bigfork Valley also may release protected health information to a funeral director as necessary to carry out the funeral director's duties, including arrangements after death.

Additional Applicable State Law Requirements

Minnesota law generally requires the consent of a patient's authorized family or legal representative for disclosures of protected health information by Bigfork Valley to funeral directors.

National Security Activities

Bigfork Valley may release protected health information to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counterintelligence or other national security activities authorized by law. Bigfork Valley also may disclose protected health information to authorized federal officials so they may provide protection to the President or other authorized individuals.

Additional Applicable State Law Requirements

Minnesota law generally requires patient consent for disclosures of protected health information by Bigfork Valley for national security purposes, unless the disclosure is specifically required by federal law.

Required by Law

Bigfork Valley will use or disclose protected health information when required by federal, state, or local laws. For example, Bigfork Valley is required to report certain gunshot wounds and other injuries that may have resulted from an unlawful act, and abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult.

Information with Additional Protections

Certain types of protected health information may have additional protection under federal or state law. For example, protected health

information about HIV/AIDS and genetic testing results are treated differently than other types of protected health information under certain state laws. Additionally, federally assisted alcohol and drug abuse programs are subject to certain special restrictions on the use and disclosure of alcohol and drug abuse treatment information. To the extent applicable, Bigfork Valley would need to get your written permission before disclosing that information to others in many circumstances.

Part III Patients' Rights with Respect to Protected Health Information

This section describes the rights of Bigfork Valley patients to protected health information.

Right to Inspect and Copy

You have the right to inspect and to request a copy of information maintained in Bigfork Valley's designated medical record about you. This includes medical and billing records maintained and used by Bigfork Valley to make decisions about your care.

Most patients have full access to inspect and receive a copy of the full medical record. On rare occasions, Bigfork Valley may deny a request to inspect and receive a copy of some information in the medical record. For example, this may occur if, in the professional judgment of a patient's physician, the release of the information would be reasonably likely to endanger the life or physical safety of the patient or another person.

Right to Request Alternate Methods of Communication

You have a right to request that Bigfork Valley communicate with you in certain ways (such as a letter or by phone) or at a certain location. For example, you may ask that we contact you only at home or only at your place of business. In this situation, you may submit a written request to Bigfork Valley. Bigfork Valley will accommodate reasonable requests. However, if the request could result in Bigfork Valley not being able to collect for services, Bigfork Valley reserves the right to require you to provide additional information about how payment for services will be handled.

Right to Request Amendment

You have the right to request that your protected health information in Bigfork Valley's designated medical record to be amended. If you wish to request amendment of the information in your record, submit a written request to the applicable at Bigfork Valley and address the request to Bigfork Valley. The request must include a reason to support the amendment. Bigfork Valley may deny a request for amendment based upon any of the following circumstances:

- the request is not in writing or does not include a supporting reason;
- the information you want to change was not created by Bigfork Valley, and the originator of the information is available to make the amendment;
- the information is not part of the designated medical record; or
- the information in the record is accurate and complete.

If Bigfork Valley denies your request for an amendment, Bigfork Valley will give you a written explanation of the denial. If you still disagree with the explanation provided, you can submit your written disagreement to Bigfork Valley as referenced above, or you can ask

that your request for amendment and explanation of the denial be included in any future disclosure of the pertinent protected health information. If you submit a statement of disagreement, Bigfork Valley may include a rebuttal statement addressing your statement of disagreement in the designated medical record.

Right to a List of Certain Disclosures

You can ask Bigfork Valley for a list of the persons or organizations to which Bigfork Valley has disclosed your protected health information. This list would provide you with a summary of certain disclosures Bigfork Valley has made that you would not otherwise be in a position to know about.

The following are examples of disclosures that would not be included in the list:

- disclosures to carry out treatment, payment and health care operations;
- disclosures made directly to you (the patient) or disclosures that you have specifically authorized;
- disclosures to persons involved in your care;
- disclosures incident to a use or disclosure that is otherwise permitted or required by law;
- disclosures made for national security or intelligence purposes;
- disclosures made to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials having custody over a patient; or
- disclosures that took place before April 14, 2003.

To get a copy of the list, submit a written request to Bigfork Valley. Your request must state a time period (beginning no earlier than April 14, 2003 when the federal privacy rules went into effect and for no longer than six years). The first list requested shall be provided at no charge. For additional lists requested during the same 12-month period, Facilities may charge for the costs of providing the list.

Right to Request Restrictions

You can ask Bigfork Valley to restrict the use or disclosure of protected health information about you for treatment, payment or health care operations. Your request must be in writing and submitted to Bigfork Valley. Bigfork Valley will carefully consider all requests. However, because of the integrated nature of Bigfork Valley’s medical record, Bigfork Valley is not generally able to honor most requests, nor is Bigfork Valley legally required to do so.

Complaints

If you want to file a complaint or express concerns about Bigfork Valley’s use or disclosure of protected health information, please contact:

**Attn: Director of Health Information Systems/Privacy Officer
Bigfork Valley
P.O. Box 258
Bigfork, MN 56628
(218) 743-3177
Toll Free: (866) 743-3177**

You also may file a written complaint with the United States Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Civil Rights.

Bigfork Valley honors your right to express concerns regarding your privacy. Bigfork Valley would not - nor could it legally or ethically – take action against you for filing a concern or complaint regarding the use or disclosure of your health information. Bigfork Valley reserves the right, however, to take necessary and appropriate action to maintain an environment that serves the best interests of its patients and providers.

Key Information about this Notice

- Additional paper copies of this notice will be provided upon request.
- From time to time, Bigfork Valley may change its practices concerning how we use or disclose protected health information, or how we will implement patients’ rights concerning their information. Bigfork Valley reserves the right to change the terms of this notice and make the new notice provisions effective for all protected health information maintained by Bigfork Valley. Bigfork Valley will follow the terms and conditions of the notice that is currently in effect.
- When the notice is revised, it will be posted at Bigfork Valley. It will also be available upon request at Bigfork Valley by mail.

Need More Information?

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss this in more detail, please contact the privacy officer for the Bigfork Valley.

**Attn: Director of Health Information Systems/Privacy Officer
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