

Gratia Plena
NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Effective Date: June 19, 2017

*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.*

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR PRIVACY:

Gratia Plena understands that medical (health) information about you is personal. We are committed to protecting health information about you. Gratia Plena creates a record of the care and services you receive from us which we need to provide you with quality care and to comply with certain legal requirements. This notice applies to all records of your care generated by Gratia Plena, and only by Gratia Plena.

This notice will tell you about the ways in which Gratia Plena may use and disclose medical information about you. This notice also describes your rights and certain obligations Gratia Plena has regarding the use and disclosure of healthcare information.

Gratia Plena is required by law to:

- make sure that healthcare information that identifies you is kept private,
- give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to healthcare information about you,
- and follow the terms of the notice that is currently in effect.

WHO WILL FOLLOW THIS NOTICE:

This notice applies to all records of your care generated by Gratia Plena, and only by Gratia Plena. If you are being treated by a psychiatrist or another physician for your condition in addition to Gratia Plena, your other doctor may have different policies or notices regarding that other doctor's use and disclosure of your medical information created in the other doctor's practice.

HOW GRATIA PLENA MAY USE AND DISCLOSE MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU.

The following categories describe different ways that Gratia Plena uses and discloses healthcare information. For each category of uses or disclosures, this document will explain its meaning and try to give some examples. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed. However, all of the ways Gratia Plena is permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of these categories.

For Treatment: Gratia Plena may use and disclose healthcare information about you to coordinate care with any of your other medical treatment or services. For example, a physician treating you for malnutrition or obesity may need to know if you have an Eating Disorder. However, your advance authorization would be required if you were expecting your mental health or substance abuse records from Gratia Plena be sent to another healthcare treatment facility. In addition, Gratia Plena may wish to consult with a colleague about your case in order to provide the best service to you and to ensure your safety. Gratia Plena will discuss this with you in advance. In the event of this type of consultation or supervision, your identity may not necessarily need to be revealed even though some details about your case are shared. When you or multiple members of your family are receiving services from multiple staff members at Gratia Plena, they may discuss your treatment in order to provide the best possible and most effective service.

For Payment: Gratia Plena may use and disclose healthcare information about you so that the treatment and services you receive may be billed to you or to a third party. For example, we may release health information about you to a friend or family member who is involved in your medical care. Or if you are a minor, we may also give information to someone who helps pay for your care. And for instance, we may need to give your church some limited information such as the dates you receive service if your church is providing payment for your services with Gratia Plena. Gratia Plena will have you sign a permission form when contact with a third party for billing or payment is involved. The Gratia Plena Business Manager may contact you about payment or a statement. This administrative staff person will not have access to the clinical information about your account...only the minimum information necessary to handle the financial aspect of your account. You have the right to restrict certain disclosures of PHI to health plans/insurance companies if you pay out of pocket in full for the health care service.

For Gratia Plena Business Operations: Gratia Plena may use and disclose healthcare information about you and your treatment for business operations, however all attempts will be taken to protect your identity. These uses and disclosures are necessary to run programs and make sure that all of Gratia Plena's patients receive quality care. For example, we may use health information to review our treatment and services and to evaluate our performance in caring for you. We may also combine information about many patients to decide what additional services we should offer, what services are not needed, and whether certain new or old treatments are effective. We may also disclose general practice information to interested parties, such as donors, in order to increase funding for services. We may also combine the information we have with health information from other similar providers to compare how we are doing and see where we can make improvements in the care and services we offer. We will remove information that identifies you from this set of health information so others may use it to study health care and health care delivery without learning who the specific patients are.

Most uses and disclosures of psychotherapy notes, uses and disclosures of protected health information (PHI) for marketing purposes, and disclosures that constitute a sale of PHI require your authorization.

For Appointment Reminders: Gratia Plena staff may contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment for an assessment or for treatment. When you begin treatment, you can indicate if you prefer to receive these reminders or not and if so, how you prefer they be delivered (phone vs. email). You can change your mind about these reminders at any time, and Gratia Plena will make the adjustment going forward.

For Treatment Alternatives: Gratia Plena may use and disclose health information to tell you about or recommend possible treatment options or alternatives that may be of interest to you.

For Health-Related Benefits and Services: Gratia Plena may use and disclose health information to tell you about health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

In an Emergency or in Disaster Conditions: Gratia Plena may disclose health information about you to an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort so that your family can be notified about your condition, status and location. If your Safety Plan allows it, we may also tell your family or friends your condition and that you are in the psychiatric hospital. Again, this will be discussed in advance.

For Research: Under certain rare circumstances, Gratia Plena may use and disclose health information about you for research purposes. For example, a research project may involve comparing the health and recovery of all patients who received one type of treatment to those who received another, for the same condition. All research projects, however, are subject to a special approval process. This process evaluates a proposed research project and its use of health information, trying to balance the research needs with patients' need for privacy of their health information. Before Gratia Plena uses or discloses medical information for research, the project will have been approved through this research approval process, but Gratia Plena may, however, disclose health information about you to people preparing to conduct a research project, for example, to help them look for patients with specific medical needs, so long as the health information they review does not leave Gratia Plena's possession. Gratia Plena will always ask for your specific permission if the researcher will have access to your name, address or other information that reveals who you are, or will be involved in your treatment in any way.

As Required By Law: Gratia Plena will disclose your protected health information to a government agency when required to do so by federal, state, or local law.

To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety: Gratia Plena may use and disclose health information about you when necessary to prevent a serious and imminent 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 such as medical or law enforcement personnel.

OTHER SPECIAL SITUATIONS:

Military and Veterans: If you are a member of the US or foreign armed forces, Gratia Plena may release health information about you as required by military command authorities.

Workers' Compensation: Gratia Plena may release health information about you for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

Public Health Risks. Gratia Plena may disclose health information about you for public health activities. These activities generally include the following:

- to prevent or control disease, injury or disability;
- to report child abuse or neglect or elder abuse or neglect, or neglect/abuse of a disabled person;
- 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 a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.

Gratia Plena will only make this disclosure if you agree or when required or authorized by law.

Health Oversight Activities: Gratia Plena may disclose 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.

Gratia Plena Web Site, Phone (Voice) Mail, Text Message, and Email: The Gratia Plena web site contains "form fills" that allow you to enter your name, address, and email information. This is for the purpose of signing up for additional information, for mailing lists, announcements, and so on. When submitted, these forms send information to Gratia Plena via email. Because email and phone voice mail and text messages are not secure means of communication (email and voice mail can be misdirected or intercepted), please do not share detailed personal information in these media about your services. For these reasons, please also limit personal details if you send Gratia Plena an email or leave us a voice mail or send text messages. Gratia Plena has taken precautions to maintain the safety of your information coming from the web site, voice mail, text messages, and email. Gratia Plena staff use the free, encrypted text messaging app called "Signal." We encourage you to download and use this app if you are going to text Gratia Plena staff.

Lawsuits and Disputes: If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, Gratia Plena may disclose health information about you in response to a court order. We may also disclose health information about you 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. If you are currently involved or you think you may be involved in a future lawsuit or dispute, please report this to Gratia Plena as soon as possible.

Law Enforcement: Gratia Plena may release 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 person's agreement;
- About a death which may be the result of criminal conduct;
- About possible criminal conduct having to do with Gratia Plena's office

National Security and Intelligence Activities: Gratia Plena may release health information about you to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law and in some cases we may be forbidden to notify you that this has occurred.

Protective Services for the President and Others: Gratia Plena may disclose health information about you to authorized federal officials so they may provide protection to the President, other authorized persons or foreign heads of state or conduct special investigations, and in some cases we may be forbidden to notify you that this has occurred.

Inmates: If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement official, Gratia Plena may release health information about you to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be 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.

In the Event of Your Death: Gratia Plena may release your records to satisfy a request for medical records of a deceased or incompetent person pursuant to Section 74.051(e), Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code.

Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors: Gratia Plena may release 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. He may also release health information about patients to funeral directors as necessary to carry out their duties.

In the Event of Gratia Plena Staff Death, Retirement, or Closure of Gratia Plena: Gratia Plena has made arrangements for the safekeeping and protection of your records, in the event of death or retirement of staff, or the closing of the corporation Gratia Plena for any reason.

The Retention and Destruction of Records: The Texas Department of State Health Services Retention Schedule for Medical Records has Guidelines for Doctors' Offices and Clinics regarding the retention and destruction of medical records. For adults, mental health records must be retained for seven years past the last date on which service was given or until the child patient's 21st birthday, whichever occurs later. The retention of couples or family therapy records is dependent upon the age of the youngest member of the couple or family participating in treatment. Paper records must be destroyed by shredding and electronic records must be deleted. Gratia Plena does not maintain any microfiche records. Financial records are to be maintained a minimum of 5 years from date of service or until all audit questions, appeal hearings, investigations, or court cases are resolved. "Master Patient Index" records (which contain only basic information about you) will be retained permanently.

Other uses and disclosures not described in these Privacy Notices will be made only with your authorization.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING THE MEDICAL INFORMATION BEING KEPT ABOUT YOU:

You have the following rights regarding medical information Gratia Plena maintains about you:

Right to Inspect and Copy: You have the right to inspect and receive a copy of healthcare information that may be used to make decisions about your care. Usually, this includes medical and billing records, but does not include psychotherapy notes.

To inspect and/or obtain a copy of healthcare information that may be used to make decisions about you, you must submit your request in writing to “Dr. Ken Buckle at Gratia Plena, 10707 Corporate Drive, Suite #135, Stafford, TX 77477.” If you request a copy of the information, Gratia Plena may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing or other supplies associated with your request.

Gratia Plena may deny your request to inspect and receive a copy in certain limited circumstances. If you are denied access to healthcare information, you may request that the denial be reviewed. Another licensed health care professional chosen by Gratia Plena will review your request and the denial. The person conducting the review will not be the person who denied your request. Gratia Plena will comply with the outcome of the review.

Right to Amend: If you feel that health information Gratia Plena has about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask him to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by Gratia Plena.

To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to “Dr. Ken Buckle at Gratia Plena, 10707 Corporate Drive, Suite #135, Stafford, TX 77477.” In addition, you must provide a reason that supports your request. Gratia Plena 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, he may deny your request if you ask him to amend information that:

- Was not created by Gratia Plena, unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment;
- Is not part of the medical information kept by Gratia Plena;
- Is not part of the information which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or
- Is accurate and complete.

Right to an Accounting of Disclosures: You have the right to request an accounting of disclosures Gratia Plena has made, if any, of your protected health information. This is a list of the disclosures he made of health information about you to individuals or entities when we were not required to obtain an authorization from you to release your protected health information. For example, in a situation where we were served with a subpoena requiring him to release the information.

To request this list or accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to “Dr. Ken Buckle at Gratia Plena, 10707 Corporate Drive, Suite #135, Stafford, TX 77477.” Your request must state a time period, which may not be longer than six years and may not include dates before January 1, 2012. The first list you request within a 12-month period will be free. 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 have the right to be notified following a breach of unsecured protected health information.

Right to Request Restrictions: You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the medical information Gratia Plena uses or discloses about you for treatment, payment or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the health information we disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member or friend. For example, you could ask that we not use or disclose information about job or surgery you had.

By law, Gratia Plena is not required to agree to your request. If we do agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you emergency treatment.

To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to Dr. Ken Buckle at Gratia Plena “10707 Corporate Drive, Suite #135, Stafford, TX 77477.” In your request, you must tell Gratia Plena: (1) what information you want to limit; (2) whether you want to limit his 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 Gratia Plena communicates with you about healthcare matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you at work or only by mail.

To request confidential communications, you must make your request in writing to “Dr. Ken Buckle at Gratia Plena, 10707 Corporate Drive, Suite #135, Stafford, TX 77477.” We will not ask you the reason for your request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted.

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

To obtain a current paper copy of this notice, or to ask any questions regarding this notice, please contact “Dr. Ken Buckle at Gratia Plena, 10707 Corporate Drive, Suite #135, Stafford, TX 77477.”

CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE:

Gratia Plena reserves the right to change this notice. We reserve the right to make the revised or changed notice effective for medical information we already have about you as well as any information he receives in the future. We will post a copy of the current notice in our office and/or out web site. The notice will contain, on the first page, the effective date. If we change this notice, we will offer you a copy of the current notice in effect when you register for health care services.

COMPLAINTS AND QUESTIONS:

If you have questions about this notice or Gratia Plena’s privacy practices, please ask us. If you think Gratia Plena may have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision he made about access to your protected health information, you may file a complaint with “Dr. Ken Buckle at Gratia Plena, 10707 Corporate Drive, Suite #135, Stafford, TX 77477.” You may also file a written complaint with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. You will not be penalized by Gratia Plena for filing a complaint.

OTHER USES OF MEDICAL INFORMATION:

Other uses and disclosures of health information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to Gratia Plena’s practice will be made only with your written permission. If you provide us permission to use or disclose health information about you, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission in writing, we will no longer use or disclose health information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that Gratia Plena is unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain records of the care that we have provided to you.