

# Murrayville Family Practice Group

## Personal Information Protection Policy

At Murrayville Family Practice Group, we are committed to providing our patients with exceptional service. As providing this service involves the collection, use and disclosure of some personal information about our patients, protecting their personal information is one of our highest priorities.

While we have always respected our patient's privacy and safeguarded their personal information, we have strengthened our commitment to protecting personal information as a result of British Columbia's *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA). PIPA, which came into effect on January 1, 2004, sets out the ground rules for how B.C. businesses and not-for-profit organizations may collect, use and disclose personal information.

We will inform our patients of why and how we collect, use and disclose their personal information, obtain their consent where required, and only handle their personal information in a manner that a reasonable person would consider appropriate in the circumstances.

This Personal Information Protection Policy, in compliance with PIPA, outlines the principles and practices we will follow in protecting patients' personal information. Our privacy commitment includes ensuring the accuracy, confidentiality, and security of our patients' personal information and allowing our patients to request access to, and correction of, their personal information.

### Definitions

**Personal Information** –means information about an identifiable individual. Examples include name, age, home address and phone number, social insurance number, marital status, religion, income, credit history, medical information, education, employment information. Personal information does not include contact information.

**Contact information** – means information that would enable an individual to be contacted at a place of business and includes name, position name or title, business telephone number, business address, business email or business fax number. Contact information is not covered by this policy or PIPA.

**Privacy Officer** – means the individual designated responsibility for ensuring that Murrayville Family Practice Group complies with this policy and PIPA.

## Policy 1 – Collecting Personal Information

- 1.1 Unless the purposes for collecting personal information are obvious and the patient voluntarily provides his or her personal information for those purposes, we will communicate the purposes for which personal information is being collected, either orally or in writing, before or at the time of collection.
- 1.2 We will only collect patient information that is necessary to fulfill the following purposes:
  - To verify identity;
  - To identify patient preferences;
  - To understand the financial needs of our patients;
  - To provide medical services;
  - To enrol the client in a medical program;
  - To ensure a high standard of service to our patients;
  - To meet regulatory requirements;

## Policy 2 – Consent

- 2.1 We will obtain patient consent to collect, use or disclose personal information (except where, as noted below, we are authorized to do so without consent).
- 2.2 Consent must be provided *in writing or electronically, through an authorized representative* or it can be implied where the purpose for collecting using or disclosing the personal information would be considered obvious and the patient voluntarily provides personal information for that purpose.
- 2.3 Consent may also be implied where a patient is given notice and a reasonable opportunity to opt-out of his or her personal information being used for mail-outs and the patient does not opt-out.

- 2.4 Subject to certain exceptions (e.g., the personal information is necessary to provide the service or product, or the withdrawal of consent would frustrate the performance of a legal obligation), patients can withhold or withdraw their consent for Murrayville Family Practice Group to use their personal information in certain ways. A patient's decision to withhold or withdraw their consent to certain uses of personal information may restrict our ability to provide a particular service or product. If so, we will explain the situation to assist the patient in making the decision.
- 2.5 We may collect, use or disclose personal information without the patient's knowledge or consent in the following limited circumstances:
- When the collection, use or disclosure of personal information is permitted or required by law;
  - In an emergency that threatens an individual's life, health, or personal security;
  - When the personal information is available from a public source (e.g., a telephone directory);
  - When we require legal advice from a lawyer;
  - For the purposes of collecting a debt;
  - To protect ourselves from fraud;
  - To investigate an anticipated breach of an agreement or a contravention of law

### **Policy 3 – Using and Disclosing Personal Information**

- 3.1 We will only use or disclose patient personal information where necessary to fulfill the purposes identified at the time of collection *or for a purpose reasonably related to those purposes such as:*
- To conduct patient surveys in order to enhance the provision of our services;
  - To contact our patients directly about products and services that may be of interest;
- 3.2 We will not use or disclose patient personal information for any additional purpose unless we obtain consent to do so.
- 3.3 We will not sell patient lists or personal information to other parties.

### **Policy 4 – Retaining Personal Information**

- 4.1 If we use patient personal information to make a decision that directly affects the patient, we will retain that personal information for at least one year so that the patient has a reasonable opportunity to request access to it.
- 4.2 Subject to policy 4.1, we will retain patient personal information only as long as necessary to fulfill the identified purposes or a legal or business purpose.

**Policy 5 – Ensuring Accuracy of Personal Information**

- 5.1 We will make reasonable efforts to ensure that patient personal information is accurate and complete where it may be used to make a decision about the patient or disclosed to another organization.
- 5.2 Patients may request correction to their personal information in order to ensure its accuracy and completeness. A request to correct personal information must be made in writing and provide sufficient detail to identify the personal information and the correction being sought.
- A request to correct personal information (located on our website) should be forwarded to the Privacy Officer.*
- 5.3 If the personal information is demonstrated to be inaccurate or incomplete, we will correct the information as required and send the corrected information to any organization to which we disclosed the personal information in the previous year. If the correction is not made, we will note the patients' correction request in the file.

**Policy 6 – Securing Personal Information**

- 6.1 We are committed to ensuring the security of patient personal information in order to protect it from unauthorized access, collection, use, disclosure, copying, modification or disposal or similar risks.
- 6.2 The following security measures will be followed to ensure that patient personal information is appropriately protected:
- *the use of locked filing cabinets;*
  - *physically securing offices where personal information is held;*
  - *the use of user IDs, passwords, encryption, firewalls;*
  - *restricting employee access to personal information as appropriate (i.e., only those that need to know will have access; contractually requiring any service providers to provide comparable security measures).*
- 6.3 We will use appropriate security measures when destroying patient's personal information such as *shredding documents and permanently deleting electronically stored information.*

- 6.4 We will continually review and update our security policies and controls as technology changes to ensure ongoing personal information security.

**Policy 7 – Providing Patients Access to Personal Information**

- 7.1 Patients have a right to access their personal information, subject to limited exceptions.
- 7.2 A request to access personal information must be made in writing and provide sufficient detail to identify the personal information being sought. A request to access personal information should be forwarded to the Privacy Officer.
- 7.3 Upon request, we will also tell patients how we use their personal information and to whom it has been disclosed if applicable.
- 7.4 We will make the requested information available within 30 business days or provide written notice of an extension where additional time is required to fulfill the request.
- 7.5 A minimal fee may be charged for providing access to personal information. Where a fee may apply, we will inform the patient of the cost and request further direction from the patient on whether or not we should proceed with the request.
- 7.6 If a request is refused in full or in part, we will notify the patient in writing, providing the reasons for refusal and the recourse available to the patient.

**Policy 8 – Questions and Complaints: The Role of the Privacy Officer or designated individual**

- 8.1 The Privacy Officer is responsible for ensuring Murrayville Family Practice Group's compliance with this policy and the *Personal Information Protection Act*.
- 8.2 Patients should direct any complaints, concerns or questions regarding Murrayville Family Practice Group's compliance in writing to the Privacy Officer. If the Privacy Officer is unable to resolve the concern, the patient may also write to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of British Columbia.

Contact information for Murrayville Family Practice Group's Privacy Officer or designated individual:

Dr. Mitchell Fagan, Medical Director, Murrayville Family Practice Group