

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We know your health information is personal and important. We're here to make it easy for you to get the records you need, while keeping your privacy protected. Below are answers to some common questions our patients ask.

### How do I request my medical records?

To get a copy of your records, just fill out our **AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION**. It only takes a few minutes, and you can submit the online webform version, or send it back to us by fax, mail, or drop it off in person – whatever is easiest for you! Just keep in mind: no matter how you submit the form, all requests are processed by our central Medical Records Department, not by individual Avance Care clinics/offices. This means the processing time stays the same no matter where or how you submit your request.

To protect your privacy, we also require valid identification with your request, e.g. copy of a government-issued photo ID (driver's license or passport) is usually all we need. This helps us make sure we're only releasing your information to you or someone you've authorized.

### Who can request my medical records?

Only you - or someone you've given legal permission to, like a parent, legal guardian, or person with medical power of attorney - can request your medical records. Third parties can also request your information (like an attorney or insurance company) with your written authorization that clearly describes what specific information they need and why.

### How long will it take to get my records?

We'll get your records to you as quickly as we can. By law, we have up to 30 days to fulfill your request, but often it's much faster. If there's any delay, we'll let you know what's going on and when you can expect them.

### Is there a cost to request records?

If *you* are requesting your own medical records, we do **not** charge a fee. We believe you should have easy access to your health information.

However, if a *third party* (like an attorney, insurance company, etc.) requests your records, there may be a fee. These charges follow state and federal guidelines and help cover the cost of preparing and sending the records. You can view our current fee schedule for third-party requests [on our website](#).

### Can you send my records to someone else?

Yes! You have every right to ask us to send your records to another doctor, family member, or anyone else you choose. Just make sure your request is signed and clearly tells us where to send the information.

### What's included in my medical record?

Your legal medical record includes the documents used to make decisions about your care, support diagnosis, justify treatment, and ensure continuity of care. The following components are typically included:

- Medical history and physical exams
- Progress notes and provider documentation
- Lab and imaging results
- Medication and allergy lists
- Immunization records
- Procedure reports
- Referrals/Specialist reports
- Consent forms
- External records received and actively used in current treatment or clinical decision-making

The following items are **not** typically included, which includes those items that originate from external sources or were not ordered by our providers.

- External historical records received from outside providers solely kept for reference only and not actively used in current care.
- Psychotherapy or SUD counseling notes
- Administrative data (e.g., appt schedules, billing records unless specifically indicated on authorization)
- Informal or internal communications
- Quality assurance and peer review documents

### Times We May Say "No" to a Record Request

It's rare, but there are times we may not be able to share certain parts of your record - either to protect your privacy, the safety of others, or because the law says we can't.

- **Psychotherapy or SUD Counseling Notes:** These are private notes your therapist or counselor keeps just for themselves. They're separate from your regular medical record, and we don't release them unless you give special and separate permission, in accordance with 45 CFR §164.508(a)(2) and 42 CFR Part 2. *Not all therapists or counselors take private notes, so if they don't exist, we won't have anything to release.*
- **Legal Investigations:** If something was documented specifically to prepare for a court case or legal matter, we're not allowed to share that information.
- **Safety Concerns:** If your provider believes that seeing your records might lead to serious harm to you or someone else, we may not be able to release them. This isn't a common situation, but your safety is always our top priority.
- **Protecting Other People's Privacy:** If your records include information about someone else (not a doctor or provider), and it could seriously hurt that person to share it, we may need to limit access.
- **If You're Incarcerated:** For patients in prison or jail, there are limits on access if sharing the records would affect safety or security.
- **We Don't Have the Records:** If the information you're asking for isn't part of the records we manage, we won't be able to provide it.

