

NOTICE OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO PROTECT THE PRIVACY OF YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

I. Uses and Disclosures for Treatment, Payment, and Health Care Operations

I may use or disclose your *protected health information (PHI)*, for *treatment, payment, and health care operations* purposes with your *consent*. To help clarify these terms, here are some definitions:

- “*PHI*” refers to information in your health record that could identify you.
- “*Treatment, Payment and Health Care Operations*”
 - *Treatment* is when I provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and other services related to your health care. An example of treatment would be when I consult with another health care provider, such as your family physician or another psychologist.
 - *Payment* is when I obtain reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are when I disclose your PHI to your health insurer to obtain reimbursement for your health care or to determine eligibility or coverage.
 - *Health Care Operations* are activities that relate to the performance and operation of my practice. Examples of health care operations are quality assessment and improvement activities, business-related matters such as audits and administrative services, and case management and care coordination.
- “*Use*” applies only to activities within my [office, clinic, practice group, etc.] such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “*Disclosure*” applies to activities outside of my office, such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

II. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

I may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and health care operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. An “*authorization*” is written permission above and beyond the general consent that permits only specific disclosures. In those instances when I am asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and health care operations, I will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information.

I will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your psychotherapy notes, if they exist. “*Psychotherapy notes*” are notes that I (may) have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which I have kept separate from the rest of your medical record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI.

You may revoke all such authorizations (of PHI) at any time, provided each revocation is in writing. You may not revoke an authorization to the extent that (1) I have relied on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage, and the law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

III. Uses and Disclosures with Neither Consent nor Authorization

I may use or disclose PHI without your consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

- **Child Abuse:** If, in my professional capacity, I know or suspect that a child under 18 years of age or a developmentally disabled or physically impaired person under 21 years of age has suffered or faces a threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition of a nature that reasonable indicates abuse or neglect, I am required by law to immediately report that knowledge of suspicion to the Ohio Public Children Services Agency or a municipal or county peace officer.
- **Elder Abuse:** If I have reasonable cause to believe that an elderly adult is being abused, neglected, or exploited, or is in a condition which is the result of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, I am required by law to immediately report such belief to the County Department of Job and Family Services or other appropriated agency.

- **Domestic Abuse:** In the case that any adult client is a victim of domestic violence, I must record information about this in my records.
- **Judicial or Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about the professional services that I have provided you and/or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I must not release this information without your written authorization, or a court order. This privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. I must inform you in advance if this is the case.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** If I believe that you pose a clear and substantial risk of imminent serious harm to yourself or another person, I may disclose your relevant confidential information to public authorities, the potential victim, other professionals, and/or your family in order to protect against such harm. If you communicate to me an explicit threat of inflicting imminent and serious physical harm or causing the death of one or more clearly identifiable victims, and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out the threat, then I may take one or more of the following actions in a timely manner: 1) take steps to hospitalize you on an emergency basis, 2) establish and undertake a treatment plan calculated to eliminate the possibility that you will carry out the threat, and initiate arrangements for a second opinion risk assessment with another mental health professional, 3) communicate to a law enforcement agency and, if feasible, to the potential victim(s), or victim's parent or guardian if a minor, all of the following information: a) the nature of the threat, b) your identity, and c) the identity of the potential victim(s).
- **Health Oversight:** If there is an inquiry or complaint made about my professional conduct to the Ohio Board of Psychology, I may be required to provide your confidential mental health records relevant to this inquiry.

IV. Patient's Rights and Psychologist's Duties

Patient's Rights:

- *Right to Request Restrictions* – You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information about you. However, I am not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- *Right to Receive Confidential Communications by Alternative Means and at Alternative Locations* – You have the right to request and receive confidential communications of PHI by alternative means and at alternative locations. (For example, you may not want a family member to know that you are seeing me. Upon your request, I will send your bills to another address.)
- *Right to Inspect and Copy* – You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of PHI in my mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases, you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process.
- *Right to Amend* – You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your request. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the amendment process.
- *Right to an Accounting* – You generally have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of PHI for which you have neither provided consent nor authorization (as described in Section III of this Notice). On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.
- *Right to a Paper Copy* – You have the right to obtain a paper copy of this notice from me upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.
- *Right to restrict disclosures when you have paid for your care out-of-pocket.* You have the right to restrict certain disclosures of PHI to a health plan when you pay out-of-pocket in full for my services.
- *Right to be notified if there is a breach of your unsecured PHI.* You have a right to be notified if: (a) use or disclosure of your PHI in violation of the HIPAA Privacy Rule involving your PHI, (b) that PHI has not been encrypted to government standards, and (c) my risk assessment fails to determine that there is a low probability that your PHI has been compromised.

Psychologist's Duties:

- I am required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of my legal duties and privacy practices

with respect to PHI.

- I reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless I notify you of such changes, however, I am required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- If I revise my policies and procedures, I will provide you with an updated copy by mail or otherwise as required by law.

V. Questions and Complaints

If you have questions about this notice, disagree with a decision I made about access to your records, or have other concerns about your privacy rights, you may contact me at 216-223-7169. If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated and wish to file a complaint with me/my office, you may send your written complaint to me at 25201 Chagrin Blvd., Suite 390, Beachwood, OH 44122. If you do not feel comfortable doing this, you may call The Ohio Board of Psychology at 614-466-8808 or send a written complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions and Changes to Privacy Policy

I reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that I maintain. I will provide you with a revised notice by providing you with a paper copy at our next session from the date of revision. If you are no longer in therapy, I will provide a revised notice only at your written request. Any changes to this notice will also be posted to my website.