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HIPAA Privacy Notice

Notice of Psychologists' 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 psychotherapist.
 - *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 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. “*Psychotherapy Notes*” are notes I 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 or Psychotherapy Notes) 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 I have reasonable cause to know or suspect that any child has been abused or neglected, as defined below, or is a victim of sexual abuse by another child, I must, within 24 hours, transfer that information to the Rhode Island Department of Child, Youth and Families, or its agent.

Child abuse and/or neglect is defined as a child whose physical or mental health or welfare is harmed, or threatened with harm when his or her parent or other person responsible for his or her welfare:

- Inflicts, or allows to be inflicted physical or mental injury;
 - Creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of physical or mental injury;
 - Commits or allows to be committed an act of sexual abuse, sexual assault against, or exploitation of the child;
 - Fails to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care;
 - Fails to provide the child with a minimum degree of care or proper supervision or guardianship because of his/her unwillingness or inability to do so; and abandons or deserts the child.
- **Health Oversight:** If a complaint is filed against me with the Rhode Island Board of Psychology, the Administrator of Professional Regulation (of the Division of Health) has the authority to subpoena confidential mental health information from me relevant to that complaint.
- **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 provided to you and the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I will not release this information without: 1) written authorization by you or your legal representative; or 2) a subpoena of which you have received official notification and you have failed to inform me that you are opposing the subpoena; or 3) a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** I may release your confidential health care information to appropriate law enforcement personnel, or to a person, if I believe that person or their family to be in danger from you.
- **Workers' Compensation:** If you file a worker's compensation claim, I must release your relevant mental health care information for the proceedings.

There may be additional disclosures of PHI that I am required or permitted by law to make without your consent or authorization; however, the disclosures listed above are the most common.

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. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the request 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 regarding you. 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 the notice from me upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.

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 inform you either in person or by mail.

V. Questions and Complaints

If you have questions about this notice, disagree with a decision I make about access to your records, believe that your privacy rights have been violated and wish to file a complaint, or have other concerns about your privacy rights, you may discuss these with me at 1130 Ten Rod Road, E101, North Kingstown RI 02852, 401-294-6900.

You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. I can provide you with the appropriate address upon request.

You have specific rights under the Privacy Rule. I will not retaliate against you for exercising your right to file a complaint.

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions, and Changes to Privacy Policy

This notice will go into effect on September 5, 2006.

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. At such time I will notify you of this change either in person or by mail. The current version of this document will always be available to you at my office.