

**Pennsylvania 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 read and 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 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 reason to suspect, on the basis of my professional judgment, that a child is or has been abused, I am required to report my suspicions to the authority or government agency vested to conduct child abuse investigations. I am required to make such reports even if I do not see the child in my professional capacity. I am mandated to report suspected child abuse if anyone aged 14 or older tells me that he or she committed child abuse, even if the victim is no longer in danger. I am also mandated to report suspected child abuse if anyone tells me that he or she knows of any child who is currently being abused, and to report anyone who reports viewing or possessing child pornography.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If I have reasonable cause to believe that an older adult is in need of protective services (regarding abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment), I may report such to the local agency which provides protective services.
- **Judicial or Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made about the professional services I provided you or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I will not release the information without your written consent, or 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:** If you express a serious threat, or intent to kill or seriously injure an identified or readily identifiable person or group of people, and I determine that you are likely to carry out the threat, I must take reasonable measures to prevent harm. Reasonable measures may include directly advising the potential victim of the threat or intent.

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- **Worker's Compensation:** If you file a worker's compensation claim, I will be required to file periodic reports with your employer which shall include, where pertinent, history, diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis.

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. An exception to this is that at the patient's request, I may not disclose information about care you have paid for out-of-pocket to health plans, unless for treatment purposes or when it is required by law.
- *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 the notice from me upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.

I may require clients to make the requests noted above in writing. I will respond within 30 days to a request for PHI with one 30 day extension allowed. I may charge you a fee for costs of making copies of PHI that you request in addition to labor costs, and also charge for a summary of treatment.

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 am obligated to notify you if there is a breach of your PHI unless after completing a risk analysis, it is determined, that there is a "low probability of PHI compromise."
- I may not sell your PHI or use or disclose your PHI for marketing purposes without your written authorization, unless it is a permitted disclosure for payment or treatment, or permitted disclosure to patients or their designees in exchange for a reasonable cost-based fee.
- 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 mail you a copy of the updated version.

**V. Questions and Complaints**

If you have questions about this notice, disagree with a decision I make about access to your records, or have other concerns about your privacy rights, you should contact me as soon as possible.

If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated and wish to file a complaint with me, you may send your written complaint to my office address. You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. I will 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 December 31, 2014. 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 mail.