

# Limits of Confidentiality

The contents of a counselling or assessment session are considered to be confidential. Both verbal information and written records about a client can not be shared with another party without the written consent of the client or the client's legal guardian. It is the policy of this office not to release any information about a client without a signed release of information. Noted exceptions are as follows:

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## **Duty to Warn and Protect**

When a client discloses intentions or a plan to harm another person, the health care professional is required to warn the intended victim and report this information to legal authorities. In cases in which the client discloses or implies a plan for suicide, the health care professional is required to notify legal authorities and make reasonable attempts to notify the family of the client.

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## **Abuse of Children and Vulnerable Adults**

If a client states or suggests that he or she is abusing a child (or vulnerable adult) or has recently abused a child (or vulnerable adult), or a child (or vulnerable adult) is in danger of abuse, the health care professional is required to report this information to the appropriate social service and/or legal authorities.

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## **Prenatal Exposure to Controlled Substances**

Health care professionals are required to report admitted prenatal exposure to controlled substances that are potentially harmful.

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## **In the Event of a Client's Death**

In the event of a client's death, the spouse or parents of a deceased client have a right to access their child's or spouse's records.

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## **Professional Misconduct**

Professional misconduct by a health care professional must be reported by other health care professionals. In cases in which a professional or legal disciplinary meeting is being held regarding the health care professional's actions, related records may be released in order to substantiate disciplinary concerns.

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## **Court Orders**

Health care professionals are required to release records of clients when a court order has been placed.

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## **Minors/Guardianship**

Parents or legal guardians of nonemancipated minor clients have the right to access the clients' records.

**Other Provisions**

When fees for services are not paid in a timely manner, collection agencies may be utilized in collecting unpaid debts. The specific content of the services (e.g., diagnosis, treatment plan, case notes, testing) is not disclosed. If a debt remains unpaid it may be reported to credit agencies, and the client's credit report may state the amount owed, time frame, and the name of the therapist.

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In cases where claims are made *above and beyond* basic health insurance coverage (e.g., in claims of liability or psychological impairment due to accidents), insurance companies and other third-party payers may be given information that they request regarding services to clients. Information which may be requested includes type of services, dates/times of services, diagnosis, treatment plan, description of impairment, progress of therapy, case notes, and summaries.

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Information about clients may be disclosed in consultations with other professionals in order to provide the best possible treatment. In such cases the name of the client, or any identifying information, is not disclosed. Clinical information about the client is discussed.

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In some cases notes and reports are dictated/typed within the office or by outside sources specializing (and held accountable) for such procedures.

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When couples, groups, or families are receiving services, separate files are kept for individuals for information disclosed that is of a confidential nature. This information includes (a) testing results, (b) information given to the mental health professional not in the presence of the other person(s) utilizing services, (c) information received from other sources about the client, (d) diagnosis, (e) treatment plan, (f) individual reports/summaries, and (h) information that has been requested to be separate. The material disclosed in conjoint family or couples sessions, in which each party discloses such information in each other's presence, is kept in a family/couple file in the form of case notes which can only be accessed with the signed consent of all parties involved in the sessions.

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In the event that the office or mental health professional must telephone the client for purposes such as appointment cancellations or reminders, or to give/receive other information, efforts are made to preserve confidentiality. Please list where we may reach you by phone and how you would like us to identify ourselves. For example, you might request that when we phone you at home or work, we do not say the name of the therapist or the nature of the call, but rather the mental health professional's first name only.

If this information is not provided to us (below), we will adhere to the following procedure when making phone calls: First we will ask to speak to the client (or guardian) without identifying the name of the therapist. If the person answering the phone asks for more identifying information we will say that it is a personal call. We will not identify the therapist (to protect confidentiality). If we reach an answering machine or voice mail we will follow the same guidelines.

**PLEASE CHECK PLACES IN WHICH YOU PREFER TO BE REACHED BY PHONE.** Include phone numbers and how you would like us to identify ourselves when phoning you.

___ HOME	_____	_____	___ Yes	___ No
	Phone number	How should we identify ourselves?	May we say the therapist's name?	
___ WORK	_____	_____	___ Yes	___ No
	Phone number	How should we identify ourselves?	May we say the therapist's name?	
___ CELL	_____	_____	___ Yes	___ No
	Phone number	How should we identify ourselves?	May we say the therapist's name?	

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*I agree to the above limits of confidentiality and understand their meanings and ramifications.*

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Client's Name (please print)	Client's (or Guardian's) Signature	Date