



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 written authorization. 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.
- “Authorization” is your written permission to disclose confidential mental health information. All authorizations to disclose must be on a specific legally required form.

II. Other Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

I may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, or health care operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. In those instances when I am asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment, or 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, law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

III. Uses and Disclosures without Authorization

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

- Child Abuse - If I have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, I am required by law to report this belief to the appropriate authorities.
- Adult and Domestic Abuse - If I have reason to suspect that an adult is abused, neglected, or exploited, I am required by law to report this belief to the appropriate authorities.
- Judicial and Administrative Proceedings - If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your diagnosis and treatment or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I will not release information without the written authorization of you or your legal representative, or a subpoena (of which you have been served, along with the proper notice required by state law). However, if you move to quash (block) the subpoena, I am required to place said records in a sealed envelope and provide them to the clerk of the court of the appropriate jurisdiction so that the court can determine whether the records should be released. 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 communicate to me a specific and immediate threat to cause serious bodily injury or death, to an identified or to an identifiable person, and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out that threat immediately or imminently, I must take steps to protect third parties. These precautions may include (1) warning the potential victim(s), or the parent or guardian of the potential victim(s), if under 18: or (2) notifying a law enforcement officer. If I believe that you present an imminent, serious risk of physical or mental injury or death to yourself, I may make disclosures I consider necessary to protect you from harm.

IV. Patient's Rights and Psychologist's Duties

- Right to Request Restrictions - You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information. 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. On 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. You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of Psychotherapy Notes unless I believe the disclosure of the record will be injurious to your health. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process for both PHI and Psychotherapy Notes.
- 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. 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.

Counselor'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 a revised notice, either in person or by mail to the address recorded in your PHI file.

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 may contact me at (434)260-8141. If after discussing your concerns with me, you believe that your privacy rights have been violated and wish to file a complaint, you may submit a written complaint to me. You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (for whom I can supply a mailing address). 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 January 1, 2015. 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 in person or by mail.

Important Note:

If you contact Jessica to obtain your medical records and cannot reach her (please allow 72 hours for a response), please contact her colleague, Robin C. Bernhard, LCSW for assistance.

Below is the contact information for Robin:

Robin C. Bernhard, LCSW
420 Third St. NE
Charlottesville, VA 22902
Office Phone: (434)260-8141
bernhard.robin@gmail.com