

## **Notice of Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information**

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MENTAL HEALTH 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 Operation**

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 a psychologist.
  - Payment* refers to reimbursement for your health care. Examples of payment are when PHI is disclosed 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 or operation of the practice. Examples are quality assessment and improvement activities, business-related matters (such as audits) and administrative services, case management and care coordination.
- “*Use*” applies only to activities within the office, such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “*Disclosure*” applies to activities outside of the 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 those outlined above, I will obtain authorization from you before releasing that information. I will also need to obtain authorization before releasing your *Psychotherapy Notes*. These 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 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 insurance coverage, the law provides the insurer with 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 know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a child known to me in my professional capacity has been or is in immediate danger of being mentally or physically abused or neglected, I must immediately report such knowledge or suspicion to the appropriate authority.
- *Adult and Domestic Abuse* – If I believe that an adult is in need of protective services because of abuse or neglect by another person, I must immediately report this belief to the appropriate authorities.
- *Health Oversight Activities* – If the D.C. Board of Psychology is investigating me or my practice, I may be required to disclose PHI to the Board.
- *Judicial and Administrative Proceedings* – If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about the professional services I have provided you and/or the records thereof, such information is privileged under D.C. law, and I will not release information without the written authorization of you or your legally appointed representative or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court offered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.
- *Serious Threat to Health or Safety* – If I believe disclosure of PHI is necessary to protect you or another individual from a substantial risk of imminent and serious physical injury, I may disclose the PHI to the appropriate individuals.
- *Worker’s Compensation* – If I am treating you for Worker’s Compensation purposes, I must provide periodic progress

reports, treatment records and bills (upon request) to you, the D.C. Office of Hearings and Adjudication, your employer, or your insurer (or their representatives).

#### **IV. Patient's Rights and Provider'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. However, I am not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- Right to Receive Confidential Information 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 in treatment with me. Upon your request, I will send 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 the decision reviewed. You may be denied access to Psychotherapy Notes if I believe that a limitation of access is necessary to protect you from a substantial risk of imminent psychological impairment or to protect you or another individual from a substantial risk of imminent and serious physical injury. I shall notify you or your representative if I do not grant complete access. Upon 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. Upon 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. Upon 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.

##### **Provider'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 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 intend to revise my policies and procedures, I must describe in the notice to patients how I will provide patients with a revised notice of privacy policies and procedures (e.g. by mail, e-mail).

#### **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 (Heather Diamond, Psy.D. at (202) 805-0663). 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 me at: **1634 Eye Street, NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20006**. 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. Please note: 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 August 1, 2004. 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 or in person.