



Counseling Center *of Northwest Indiana*

Notice of Privacy Practices (HIPAA)

To our clients: This notice describes how health information about you, as our client, may be used and disclosed, and how you can get access to your health information. This is required by the Privacy Regulations created as a result of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

Our commitment to your privacy:

Our practice is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your health information. We are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of your health information.

We realize that these laws are complicated, but we must provide you with the following important health information:

I. Uses and Disclosures for Treatment, Payment, and Health Care Operations

We 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 we provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and other services related to your health care. An example of treatment would be when we consult with another health care provider, such as your family physician or another psychologist.
 - “Payment” is when we obtain reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are when we 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 our 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.



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- "Use" applies only to activities within our private practice office such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- "Disclosure" applies to activities outside of our private practice 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

We 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 we are asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment, or health care operations, we will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. We will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your Psychotherapy Notes.

"Psychotherapy Notes" are notes we have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which we 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 already acted on that authorization; (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; and (3) if this was a Court Ordered Referral or other third party referral in which you are not legally defined as the client.



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III. Uses and Disclosures without Authorization

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

- **Child Abuse** - If we have reasonable cause to believe a child known to us in our professional capacity may be an abused child or a neglected child, we must report this belief to the appropriate authorities.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse** - If we have reason to believe that an individual (who is protected by state law) has been abused, neglected, or financially exploited, we must report this belief to the appropriate authorities.
- **Health Oversight Activities** - We may disclose protected health information regarding you to a health oversight agency for oversight activities authorized by law, including licensure or disciplinary actions.
- **Judicial and Administrative Proceedings** - If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information by any party about your evaluation, diagnosis and treatment and the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and we must not release such information without a court order. We can release the information directly to you on your request. Information about all other psychological services is also privileged and cannot be released without your authorization 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 must be informed in advance if this is the case.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety** - If you communicate to us a specific threat of imminent harm against another individual or if we believe that there is clear, imminent risk of physical or mental injury being inflicted against another individual, we may make disclosures that we believe are necessary to protect that individual from harm. If we believe that you present an imminent, serious risk of physical or mental injury or death to yourself, we may make disclosures we consider necessary to protect you from harm.
- **Worker's Compensation** - We may disclose protected health information regarding you as authorized by and to the extent necessary to comply with laws relating to worker's



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compensation or other similar programs, established by law, that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness without regard to fault.

IV. Patient's Rights and Therapist'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, we are 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 us. On your request, we 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 and Psychotherapy Notes. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the request for access 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. We may deny your request. On your request, we 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. On your request, we 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.

Therapist's Duties:

- We are required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.



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- We reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless we notify you of such changes, however, we am required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- If we revise my policies and procedures, we will notify you if you will be affected.

V. Complaints

If you are concerned that we have violated your privacy rights, or disagree with a decision we have made about access to your records, you may contact us by telephone at (219) 286-7258 or in writing at 257 Indiana Avenue Suite B2, Valparaiso, IN 46383.

The law also provides that you may send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. If you need that address, we will be happy to provide it.

VI. Effective Date of the Privacy Policy and Changes to the Privacy Policy

This notice will go into effect on September 8, 2015.

We will limit the uses or disclosures that we will make as defined by Indiana law and as advised by the National Association for Social Workers.

We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI we maintain. We will provide you with a revised notice by personally handing you information if you visit our offices or by mail if you telephone or write our office and request this information.

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of Counseling Center of Northwest Indiana's Notice of Privacy Practices.

(Client)

(Date)