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NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

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 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:** includes any individually identifiable health information received or created by my office or me.
- **Health information:** is information in any form that relates to any past, present, or future health of an individual.
- **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.
- **Consent:** refers to your consent and agreement to my releasing your PHI.

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. I may use or disclose confidential information (including but not limited to PHI) for purposes of treatment, payment, and healthcare operations when your written informed consent is obtained. I may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and healthcare operations when your appropriate written 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. I will also obtain an authorization from you before using or disclosing PHI in a way that is not described in this Notice.

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.
- (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 reasonable cause to believe that a child with whom I have had contact has been abused I may be required to report the abuse. Additionally, if I have reasonable cause to believe that an adult with whom I have had contact has abused a child, I may be required to report the abuse. In any child abuse investigation, I may be compelled to turn over PHI. Regardless of whether I am required to disclose PHI or to release documents, I also have an ethical obligation to prevent harm to my patients and others. I will use my professional judgment to determine whether it is appropriate to disclose PHI to prevent harm. If there is a child abuse investigation, I may be compelled to turn over your relevant records.
- **Mentally Ill or Developmentally Disabled Adults:** If I have reasonable cause to believe that a mentally ill or developmentally disabled adult, who receives services from a community program or facility, has been abused, I may be required to report the abuse. Additionally, if I have reasonable cause to believe that any person with whom I come into contact has abused a mentally ill or developmentally disabled adult, I may be required to report the abuse. Regardless of whether I am required to disclose PHI or to release documents, I also have an ethical obligation to prevent harm to my patients and others. I will use my professional judgment to determine whether it is appropriate to disclose PHI to prevent harm.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If I have the responsibility for the care of an incapacitated or vulnerable adult, I am required to disclose PHI when I have a reasonable basis to believe that abuse or neglect of the adult has occurred or that exploitation of the adult's property has occurred.

- **Elder Abuse:** If I have reasonable cause to believe an elder with whom I have had contact has been abused, I may be required to report the abuse. Additionally, if I have reasonable cause to believe that an adult with whom I have had contact has abused an elder, I may be required to report the abuse.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** If you communicate to me an explicit threat of imminent serious physical harm or death to a clearly identified or identifiable victim(s) and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out such a threat, I may have a duty to take reasonable precautions to prevent the harm from occurring, including disclosing information to the potential victim and the police and in order to initiate hospitalization procedures. If I believe there is an imminent risk that you will inflict serious harm on yourself, I may disclose information in order to protect you. I must limit disclosure of the otherwise confidential information to only those persons and only that content which would be consistent with the standards of the profession in addressing such problems.
- **Health Oversight:** When authorized by law, I may be required to disclose your PHI to a health oversight agency for activities, such as audits, investigations, inspections, licensure actions or other legal proceedings. A health oversight agency is a state or federal agency that oversees the health care system.
- **Judicial and Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about the professional services I provided you and/or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I will not release information without a court order or the written authorization of you or your legally appointed representative. 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.
- **Worker's Compensation:** I may disclose PHI as authorized by and to the extent necessary to comply with laws relating to worker's compensation or other similar programs, established by law, that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness without regard to fault.
- **Section 164.512 of the Privacy Rule:** This includes certain narrowly-defined disclosures to law enforcement agencies, to a health oversight agency (such as HHS or a state department of health), to a coroner or medical examiner, for public health purposes relating to disease or FDA-regulated products, or for specialized government functions such as fitness for military duties, eligibility for VA benefits, and national security and intelligence.

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 certain PHI. 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. Upon your request, I will make alternative arrangements regarding billing.)
- *Right to Inspect and Copy:* You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of PHI and psychotherapy notes 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.
- *Right to Restrict Disclosures When You Have Paid for Your Care Out-of-Pocket:* You have the right to restrict certain disclosures of PHI to a health plan when you pay out-of-pocket in full for my services.
- *Right to Be Notified if There is a Breach of Unsecured PHI:* You have a right to be notified if: (a) there is a breach (a use or disclosure of your PHI in violation of the HIPPA Privacy Rule) involving your PHI; (b) that PHI has not been encrypted to government standards; and (c) my risk assessment fails to determine that there is a low probability that your PHI has been compromised.

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 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 during your course of treatment or evaluation, I will notify you by mail.

V. Questions and Complaints

If you are concerned that I have violated your privacy rights, have questions or you disagree with a decision I made about access to your records, please contact me first. However, if you are still not satisfied with our resolution, may also send a written complaint to: Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201. You will not be penalized in any way for filing a complaint.

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions and Changes to Privacy Policy

This notice is in effect as of August 1, 2017.

I will limit the uses or disclosures to the extent that such limitation does not affect my right to make a use or disclosure that is required by law or, when in good faith, to use or disclose to avert a serious threat to health or safety of a person or the public and such use or disclosure is made to a person or persons reasonably able to prevent or lessen the threat (including the target of the threat).

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. If changes are made, I will provide you with a revised notice.