

Notice of Psychologist's 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.

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” 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 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 health care. Examples of payment are when I disclose your PHI to your health insurer to obtain reimbursement for your health care or to determine eligibility for 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.

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. 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 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 keep 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 of the extent that (1) I have already relied upon and acted on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage, the law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

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 suspect child abuse or neglect has occurred or that there exists a substantial risk that child abuse or neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future, I must immediately report the matter to the appropriate authority.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse** – If I, in the performance of their professional or official duties, know or have reason to believe that a dependent adult has been abused and is threatened with imminent abuse, I must promptly report the matter to the appropriate authority.
- **Health Oversight Activities** – If the Washington Board of Psychology is investigating my competency, license or practice, I may be required to disclose PHI regarding you.
- **Judicial and Administrative Proceedings** – If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about the counseling or psychotherapy services provided to you and/or the records thereof, such information is privileged under Washington law, and I shall 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 ordered. You will be informed if this is the case.

- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety** –If you communicate to me a threat of physical violence against a reasonably identifiable third person and you have the apparent intent and ability to carry out that threat in the foreseeable future, I may disclose relevant PHI and take the reasonable steps permitted by law to prevent the threatened harm from occurring. If I believe that there is an imminent risk that you will inflict serious physical harm on yourself, I may disclose information in order to protect you.
- **Worker’s Compensation** – I may disclose protected health information regarding you 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.

Patient’s Rights

- **Right to Request Restrictions** – You have the right to request restriction on certain uses and disclosures of PHI. However, I am not required to adhere 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. 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. 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 this notice from me upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.

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, I will post a notice in my office to alert you to the revisions, and will make available to you a copy of the newly revised policies and procedures.

Complaints

If you are concerned that I have violated your privacy right, or you disagree with a decision I made about access to your records, you may contact me at my office, 801 Samish Way, Suite 105 Bellingham, WA 98229 or 360-398-3736.

In addition, I am bound by the laws of the State of Washington regarding ethical and legal standards of care. If you have any questions about what these are please ask me or go to this website www.doh.wa.gov. To contact the Washington State Examining Board of Psychology for any reason, they can be reached at 360-236-4910 or Department of Health P.O. Box 47869 Olympia, WA 98504.