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Notice of Policies to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW 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 of Information 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 mental health provider.
 - *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.

You may revoke all such authorizations of PHI 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 must report this belief to the appropriate authorities.
- *Adult and Domestic Abuse* I may disclose protected health information regarding you if I reasonably believe that you are a victim of abuse, neglect, self-neglector exploitation.

- *Serious Threat to Health or Safety* If you communicate to me a specific threat of imminent harm against another individual or if I believe that there is clear, imminent risk of physical or mental injury being inflicted against another individual, I may make disclosures that I believe are necessary to protect that individual from harm. 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.
- *Health Oversight Activities* If I receive a subpoena from the Maryland Board of Examiners of Social Workers because they are investigating my practice, I must disclose any PHI requested by the Board.
- *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 your written authorization or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated or a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.

IV. Patient=s Rights and Psychotherapist=s Duties

Patients 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 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 for PHI.
- *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 the notice from me upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.

Mental Health Providers 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 copy and make it available upon request.

V. Complaints

If you are concerned that I have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision I made about access to your records, please contact me.

You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The person listed above can provide you with the appropriate address upon request.

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions, and Changes to Privacy Policy

This notice will go into effect on April 14, 2003. 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. Upon request, I will provide you with a revised notice in person or by mail.

If you have questions about any of the above information, please ask me at any time. I will make every effort to clarify the above information to the best of my knowledge.

Thank you, Douglas Tilley, LCSW-C April 14, 2003