

Joseph L. Nines, Ph.D., L.M.F.T.

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

215-836-4276

NOTICE OF THE 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

We 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" stands for *Protected Health Information* and refers to information in your therapy record that could identify you.
- ☞ "*Treatment, Payment and Health Care Operations*"
 - *Treatment* is when we provide, coordinate or manage your therapy 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 therapist or psychiatrist.
 - *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 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.
- ☞ "*Use* " applies only to activities within our operation such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- ☞ "*Disclosure*" applies to activities outside of our office, such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

II. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

We may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and mental 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 we are asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment and 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 therapists have made about conversations during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which we have kept 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 to the extent that (1) We have relied on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining

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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

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

Child Abuse: If we have reasonable cause, on the basis of professional judgment, to suspect abuse of children with whom we come into contact in our professional capacity, we are required by law to report this to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare.

Adult and Domestic Abuse: If we have reasonable cause to believe that an older adult is in need of protective services (regarding abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment), we may report such to the local agency which provides protective services.

Judicial or Administrative Proceedings: If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made about the professional services we provided you or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and we will not release the information without your written consent, 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 in advance if this is the case.

Serious Threat to Health or Safety: If you express a serious threat, or intent to kill or seriously injure an identified or readily identifiable person or group of people, and we determine that you are likely to carry out the threat, we must take reasonable measures to prevent harm. Reasonable measures may include directly advising the potential Victim of the threat or intent.

Worker's Compensation: If you file a worker's compensation claim, we will be required to file periodic reports with your employer, which shall include, where pertinent, history, diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis.

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 about you. 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 a therapist. Upon 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 our mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. We may deny your access to PHI under

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certain circumstances, but in some cases, you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, we 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. 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 for which you have neither provided consent nor authorization (as described in Section III of this Notice). 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 Joseph L. Nines 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.
- ☞ We reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless we notify you of such changes, however, we are required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- ☞ If we revise our policies and procedures, we will provide you with a revised notice either in person or by mail.

V. Questions and Complaints

If you have questions about this notice, disagree with a decision, we make about access to your records, or have other concerns about violation of your privacy rights, you may contact us at 215-836-4276.

You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Your therapist 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 January 1, 2014.

We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that we maintain. We will provide you with a revised notice by mail or in person.

CANCELLATION POLICY

If you fail to cancel a scheduled appointment, we cannot use this time for another client and you will be billed for the entire cost of your missed appointment. A full session fee is charged for missed appointments or cancellations with less than a 24-hour notice unless it is due to illness or an emergency. A bill will be mailed directly to all clients who do not show up for, or cancel an appointment. Thank you for your consideration regarding this important matter.

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LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Contents of all therapy sessions are considered to be confidential. Both verbal information and written records about a client cannot be shared with another party without the written consent of the client or the client's legal guardian. Noted exceptions are as follows:

Duty to Warn and Protect - When a client discloses intentions or a plan to harm another person, the mental health professional is required to warn the intended victim and report this information to legal authorities.

In cases in which the client discloses or implies a plan for suicide, the health care professional is required to notify legal authorities and make reasonable attempts to notify the family of the client.

Abuse of Children and Vulnerable Adults - If a client states or suggests that he or she is abusing a child (or vulnerable adult) or has recently abused a child (or vulnerable adult), or a child (or vulnerable adult) is in danger of abuse, the mental health professional is required to report this information to the appropriate social service and/or legal authorities.

Prenatal Exposure to Controlled Substances - Mental Health care professionals are required to report admitted prenatal exposure to controlled substances that are potentially harmful.

Minors/Guardianship - Parents or legal guardians of non-emancipated minor clients have the right to access the clients' records.

Insurance Providers (when applicable) - Insurance companies and other third-party payers are given information that they request regarding services to clients.

Information that may be requested includes, but is not limited to: types of service, dates/times of service, diagnosis, treatment plan, description of impairment, progress of therapy, case notes, and summaries.