



NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

UNDER THE HEALTH INSURANCE PORTABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1996 (HIPAA), YOU HAVE CERTAIN RIGHTS REGARDING THE USE AND DISCLOSURE OF YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION.

I. OUR PLEDGE REGARDING HEALTH INFORMATION:

We understand that health information about you and your health care is personal. We are committed to protecting health information about you. We create a record of the care and services you receive from us. We need this record to provide you with quality care and to comply with certain legal requirements. This notice applies to all of the records of your care generated by this mental health care practice. This notice will tell you about the ways in which we may use and disclose health information about you. We also describe your rights to the health information we keep about you and describe certain obligations we have regarding the use and disclosure of your health information. We are required by law to:

- Make sure that protected health information (“PHI”) that identifies you is kept private.
- Give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to health information.
- Follow the terms of the notice that is currently in effect.
- We can change the terms of this Notice, and such changes will apply to all information we have about you. The new Notice will be available upon request, in our offices, and on **our website**.

II. HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:

The following categories describe different ways that we use and disclose health information. For each category of uses or disclosures we will explain what we mean and try to give some examples. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed. However, all of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of the categories.

For Treatment Payment, or Health Care Operations: Federal privacy rules (regulations) allow health care providers who have direct treatment relationship with the patient/client to use or disclose the patient/client’s personal health information without the patient’s written authorization, to carry out the health care provider’s own treatment, payment or health care operations. We may also disclose your protected health information for the treatment activities of any health care provider. This too can be done without your written authorization unless you are seeking services for a substance use disorder, which has additional federal protections called 42 CFR Part 2. For example, if a clinician were to consult with another licensed health care provider about your non-substance-related condition (and thus HIPAA-protected), we would be permitted to use and disclose your person health information,

which is otherwise confidential, in order to assist the clinician in diagnosis and treatment of your mental health condition. On the other hand, if a clinician were to consult with another licensed health care provider about your substance-related condition, a special release of information must be signed by you in advance of any disclosure.

HIPAA-protected disclosures for treatment purposes are not limited to the minimum necessary standard. Because therapists and other health care providers need access to the full record and/or full and complete information in order to provide quality care. The word “treatment” includes, among other things, the coordination and management of health care providers with a third party, consultations between health care providers and referrals of a patient for health care from one health care provider to another.

42 CFR Part 2-protected disclosures require a signed release of information that specifies the person, organization, specific information to be released and the purpose of releasing the information, as well as requesting the same information from the same individual/organization. Sometimes the organization will accept and honor our release of information, but in some cases, they may require you to sign their release form as well.

Lawsuits and Disputes: If you are involved in a lawsuit, we may disclose health information in response to a court or administrative order. We may also disclose health information about your child in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.

III. CERTAIN USES AND DISCLOSURES REQUIRE YOUR AUTHORIZATION:

1. Psychotherapy Notes. some counselors do keep “psychotherapy notes” as that term is defined in 45 CFR § 164.501, and any use or disclosure of such notes requires your Authorization unless the use or disclosure is: a. For our use in treating you. b. For our use in training or supervising mental health practitioners to help them improve their skills in group, joint, family, or individual counseling or therapy. c. For our use in defending ourselves in legal proceedings instituted by you. d. For use by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to investigate our compliance with HIPAA. e. Required by law and the use or disclosure is limited to the requirements of such law. f. Required by law for certain health oversight activities pertaining to the originator of the psychotherapy notes. g. Required by a coroner who is performing duties authorized by law. h. Required to help avert a serious threat to the health and safety of others.

2. Marketing Purposes. As a psychotherapist, we will not use or disclose your name or any other kind of protected health information for marketing purposes.

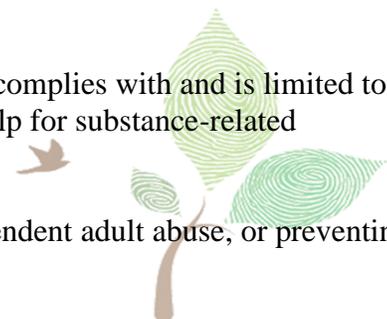
3. Sale of PHI: As therapists, we will not sell your PHI in the regular course of business.

IV. CERTAIN USES AND DISCLOSURES DO NOT REQUIRE YOUR AUTHORIZATION.

Subject to certain limitations in the law, we can use and disclose your PHI without your Authorization for the following reasons:

1. When disclosure is required by state or federal law, and the use or disclosure complies with and is limited to the relevant requirements of such law. This is true for those seeking or receiving help for substance-related conditions.

2. For public health activities, including reporting suspected child, elder, or dependent adult abuse, or preventing or reducing a serious threat to anyone’s health or safety.



3. For health oversight activities, including audits and investigations.
4. For judicial and administrative proceedings, including responding to a court or administrative order, although our preference is to obtain an Authorization from you before doing so. Counselors in NC have “privilege” like priests and attorneys; therefore, we must respond to subpoenas but are not compelled to comply with subpoenas. A judge’s bench order, though rare, requires compliance in order to avoid the counselor risking incarceration.
5. For law enforcement purposes, such as reporting crimes occurring on Full Life premises. Client reports of illegal activity, however, are protected as part of client confidentiality as long as it does not include life-threatening danger to self or others.
6. To coroners or medical examiners, when such individuals are performing duties authorized by law.
7. For research purposes, including studying and comparing the mental health of patients who received one form of therapy versus those who received another form of therapy for the same condition.
8. Specialized government functions, including, ensuring the proper execution of military missions; protecting the President of the United States; conducting intelligence or counter-intelligence operations; or, helping to ensure the safety of those working within or housed in correctional institutions.
9. For workers' compensation purposes. Although our preference is to obtain an Authorization from you, we may provide your PHI in order to comply with workers' compensation laws.
10. Appointment reminders and health related benefits or services. We may use and disclose your PHI to contact you to remind you that you have an appointment. You may opt out of receiving such reminders. We may also use and disclose your PHI to tell you about treatment alternatives, or other health care services or benefits that we offer.

V. CERTAIN USES AND DISCLOSURES REQUIRE YOU TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT.

1. Disclosures to family, friends, or others. We may disclose your PHI to a family member, friend, or other person that you indicate is involved in your care or the payment for your health care, based on your expressed preferences at the start of your care. You may change permissions at any time. The opportunity to consent may be obtained retroactively in emergency situations.

VI. YOU HAVE THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO YOUR PHI:

1. The Right to Request Limits on Uses and Disclosures of Your PHI. You have the right to ask us not to use or disclose certain PHI for treatment, payment, or health care operations purposes. Unless you are seeking services for a substance use disorder, we are not required to agree to your request, and we may say “no” if we believe it would affect your health care.
2. The Right to Request Restrictions for Out-of-Pocket Expenses Paid for In Full. You have the right to request restrictions on disclosures of your PHI to health plans for payment or health care operations purposes if the PHI pertains solely to a health care item or a health care service that you have paid for out-of-pocket in full.
3. The Right to Choose How We Send PHI to You. You have the right to ask us to contact you in a specific way (for example, home or office phone) or to send mail to a different address, and we will agree to all reasonable requests.

4. The Right to See and Get Copies of Your PHI. Other than “psychotherapy notes,” you have the right to get an electronic or paper copy of your medical record and other information that we have about you. We will provide you with a summary of it within 30 days of receiving your written request, and we may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee for doing so. If you wish to receive a copy of your full record, other than “psychotherapy notes,” in lieu of a summary, a session must be booked to allow you to review the record with your counselor or a member of our team so that we can provide explanations, answer questions, explain abbreviations and/or clinical terms, and otherwise do our best to ensure that your receipt of the information does not cause you emotional distress. We may charge a session fee for the time dedicated to meeting with you for this purpose.

5. The Right to Get a List of the Disclosures We Have Made: You have the right to request a list of instances in which we have disclosed your PHI for purposes other than treatment, payment, or health care operations, or for which you provided us with an Authorization. We will respond to your request for an accounting of disclosures within 60 days of receiving your request. The list we will give you will include disclosures made in the last six years unless you request a shorter time. We will provide the list to you at no charge, but if you make more than one request in the same year, we will charge you a reasonable cost-based fee for each additional request.

6. The Right to Correct or Update Your PHI. If you believe that there is a mistake in your PHI, or that a piece of important information is missing from your PHI, you have the right to request that we correct the existing information or add the missing information. We may say “no” to your request, but we will tell you why in writing within 60 days of receiving your request.

7. The Right to Get a Paper or Electronic Copy of this Notice. You have the right get a paper copy of this Notice, and you have the right to get a copy of this notice by e-mail. And, even if you have agreed to receive this Notice via e-mail, you also have the right to request a paper copy of it.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS NOTICE: 12/12/2020

