

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Notice of JFCS Counseling Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW 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” refers to information in your health record that could identify you or relates to your past, present or future physical or mental health condition . It can be transmitted in any form or medium.
- “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 therapist.
 - 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 our clinic. Examples of health care operations are quality assessment and improvement activities, businessrelated matters such as audits and administrative services, and case management and care coordination.
- “Use” applies only to activities within our clinic, such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “Disclosure” applies to activities outside of our clinic, such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

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. 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, health care operations, or any uses and disclosures not described in the Notice of Privacy Practices, 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 may 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.

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; or (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 certain circumstances including the following:

- **Child Abuse:** If I have reasonable cause, on the basis of my professional judgment, to suspect abuse of children with whom I come into contact whether in my professional capacity or otherwise, I am required by law to report this to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare.
I am mandated to report suspected child abuse if anyone aged 14 or older tells me that he or she committed child abuse, even if the victim is no longer in danger
I am also mandated to report suspected child abuse if anyone tells me that he or she knows of any child who is currently being abused.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If I have reasonable cause to believe that an older adult is in need of protective services (regarding abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment), I 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 I provided you or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I 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 I determine that you are likely to carry out the threat, I 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, I 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, I am not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- *Right to Restrict* – certain disclosures of Protected Health Information (PHI) to a health plan if you pay out of pocket in full for your services.
- *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 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 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 be Notified* – If there is a breach of your unsecured PHI.

Therapist'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 provide you with a copy of the revised notice at your next session at JFCS Counseling Services.

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, you may contact the Director of Clinical Services (412) 521-3800.

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.

JFCS Counseling does not take retaliatory action against a client for bringing a complaint.

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions and Changes to Privacy Policy

This notice will go into effect on **November 1, 2006**
(revised **December 18, 2014**, revised **February 27, 2020**).