

# PACIFIC PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATES

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## HIPAA NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

**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.**

### INTRODUCTION

This Notice will tell you how \_\_\_\_\_, (hereinafter called "The Therapist") will handle your medical information. It tells how I use the information in this office, how I share this information with other professionals and organizations, and how you can see the information. With some exceptions, The Therapist may not use or disclose more of your PHI (Protected Health Information) than is necessary to accomplish the purpose for which the use or disclosure is made; however, I am always legally required to follow the privacy practices described in this Notice. Because state and federal laws are complicated, a few small sections of the federal regulations have been left out here. If you have any questions or want to know more about anything in this Notice, please ask me for further instructions.

### "MEDICAL INFORMATION"

Each time you visit any doctor's office, hospital, clinic, or any other healthcare provider, information is collected about you and your physical and mental health. It may be information about your past, present or future health conditions, or the tests and treatment you received from the Therapist or others, or about payment for healthcare. The information collected by The Therapist is legally called **PHI**, which stands for **Protected Health Information**. This information goes into your medical or healthcare record. In this office, these records are called **CLIENT FILES**. In this office, the PHI is likely to include, but may not be limited, to the following kinds of information:

- Your history: as a child, in school and at work, marital status and personal history gathered at the intake and during counseling sessions.
- Reasons you came for counseling: your problems, complaints, symptoms or needs.
- Diagnoses: Diagnoses are medical terms for your problems or symptoms.
- A Treatment Plan: a list of the treatments and any other services, which are determined to be best to help you.
- Progress Notes: each time you come in, I am legally required to write a brief note about how you are doing, what you may say and what I may notice about you.
- Records received from outside sources that treated you and/or evaluated you.
- Psychological test scores, school records, court records and other reports.
- Information about medications you took or are taking.
- Legal matters
- Billing and insurance information.

The Therapist uses your PHI for many purposes. For example:

- To plan your care and treatment.
- To decide how well treatment is progressing.

- To talk with other healthcare professionals who are also treating you, such as your family doctor or the professional who referred you to The Therapist.
- To individuals you authorize release of information to and/or others who are in need of information to help you.
- To keep records of your attendance which The Therapist may bill to you or your health insurance company.
- For teaching and training other healthcare professionals, please note: in this case, no personal identifying information will be used.

When you understand what is in your record and what it is used for, you can make better decisions about who, when and why others should have this information. Although your healthcare record is the physical property of the healthcare practitioner or facility that collected it, the information belongs to you. You can read it and if you want a copy, The Therapist can make one for you (I may charge you for the costs of copying and mailing). In some situations you cannot see all of what is in your records. If you find anything in your records that you think is incorrect or believe something important is missing, you can ask to have your records amended (add information). Although, in some rare situations, The Therapist does not have to agree to this request to amend. If you need a further explanation, please see me.

### **PRIVACY AND THE LAW**

Federal law requires The Therapist to inform you about privacy regulations. These regulations are called **THE HEALTH INSURANCE PORTABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1996 (HIPAA)**. The **HIPAA** law requires The Therapist to keep your **Personal Health Information (PHI)** private and to give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices which is called **The Notice of Privacy Practices (NPP)**. The Therapist will obey the rules of this notice as long as it is in effect. If I change the rules of any new NPP, those new rules will apply to the entire PHI kept about you. You or anyone else can get a copy of the NPP from me at any time.

### **HOW YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION CAN BE USED AND SHARED**

When I use your PHI here or disclose it to others, I share only **the minimum necessary** PHI needed for those other people to do their jobs. The law gives you rights to know about your PHI, how it is used and to have a say in how it is disclosed. The Therapist uses and discloses PHI for several reasons. Primarily it will be used for routine purposes such as billing insurance and more (see below). For other uses, The Therapist must tell you about them and have a written authorization from you unless the law lets or requires The Therapist to make the disclosures without your authorization. However, the law also says that there are some uses and disclosures that don't need your authorization or consent.

### **USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PHI WITH YOUR CONSENT**

In almost all cases, The Therapist intends to use your PHI here or share your PHI with other people or organizations to help provide treatment to you, arrange for payment for services or some other business function called health care operations.

#### *For treatment*

The Therapist may use medical information to provide you with referrals for psychological treatments or services. These might include, individual, family or group therapy, psychological, educational or vocational testing, treatment planning, or measuring the benefits of our services. I may share your PHI with other helping professionals who are treating you now or who have treated you in the past.

#### *For Payment*

The Therapist may use your PHI to bill you or your insurance company, or others so treatment can be paid.

#### *For Health Care Operations*

The Therapist may use your PHI to evaluate how to make improvements in the care and services I provide. I may use PHI to use and disclose information to schedule, reschedule or remind you of appointments and if you want me to call you at home, work or anywhere else. The Therapist may use and disclose your PHI to other professional services in order to manage your treatment. The Therapist calls these other professionals, "Business Associates." Examples include, but are not limited to: insurance billing personnel, office manager and filing personnel, collection agencies and/or professional copy services.

#### **USES AND DISCLOSURES THAT REQUIRE YOUR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION**

If The Therapist wants to use your PHI for any other purposes other than those described above, The Therapist will need to obtain your written permission. If you do authorize disclosure of your PHI, you can revoke (cancel) that permission, in writing, at anytime. After that time, The Therapist will not use or disclose your information.

#### **USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PHI FROM MENTAL HEALTH RECORDS THAT DON'T REQUIRE A CONSENT OR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION**

When required by law:

- When reporting cases of suspected child abuse, elder abuse and if you become imminently suicidal or homicidal.
- In response to a subpoena.

In response to government inquiries which check on me to see if I am obeying the privacy laws

#### **OUR ADDITIONAL RIGHTS**

You have the right to receive this Notice prior to the beginning of your first scheduled counseling appointment. You have the right to file a complaint if you believe your privacy rights have been violated. You can file a complaint with the Secretary of The Department of Health and Human Services at 200 Independence Ave S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201. All complaints must be in writing. If you have questions regarding this notice, please contact The Therapist at (323) 469-9068. The effective date of this notice is October 1, 2010.