

DSM Associates Psychology Group

Notice of Privacy Practices

Effective 4-14-03

This form describes the confidentiality of your medical records, how the information is used, your rights, and how you may obtain this information.

◇ **Our Legal Duties**

State and Federal laws require that we keep your medical records private. Such laws require that we provide you with this notice informing you of our privacy of information policies, your rights, and our duties. We are required to abide by these policies until replaced or revised. We have the right to revise our privacy policies for all medical records, including records kept before policy changes were made. Any changes in this notice will be made available upon request before changes take place.

The contents of material disclosed to us in an evaluation, intake, consultation, or therapy session are covered by the law as private information. We respect the privacy of the information you provide us and we abide by ethical and legal requirements of confidentiality and privacy of records.

◇ **Use of Information**

Information about you may be used by the personnel associated with this clinic for diagnosis, treatment planning, treatment, and continuity of care. We may, with your authorization, disclose it to health care providers who provide you with treatment, such as doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, and mental health students or business associates affiliated with this clinic such as billing, collections, quality assurance, training, audits, and accreditation.

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 or personal representative. It is the policy of this clinic not to release any information about a client without a signed release of information except in certain emergency situations or exceptions in which client information can be disclosed to others without written consent. Some of these situations are noted below, and there may be other provisions provided by legal requirements.

◇ **Duty to Warn and Protect**

When a client discloses intentions or a plan to harm another person or persons, the health care 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 self-harm, the health care professional is required to notify legal authorities and make reasonable attempts to notify the family of the client.

◇ **Abuse**

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 health care professional is required to report this information to the appropriate social service and/or legal authorities. If a client is the victim of abuse, neglect, violence, or a crime, and their safety appears to be at risk, we may share this information with law enforcement officials to help prevent future occurrences and capture the perpetrator.

◇ **Judicial or Administrative Proceedings**

Health care professionals are required to release records of clients when a court order has been placed.

◇ **In the Event of a Client's Death**

In the event of a client's death, the spouse or parents of a deceased client have a right to access their child's or spouse's records.

◇ **Minors/Guardianship**

Parents or legal guardians of non-emancipated minor clients have the right to access the client's records.

◇ **Other Provisions**

When payment for services are the responsibility of the client, or a person who has agreed to providing payment, and payment has not been made in a timely manner, collection agencies may be utilized in collecting unpaid debts. The specific content of the services (e.g. diagnosis, treatment plan, progress notes, testing) is not disclosed. If a debt remains unpaid, it may be reported to credit agencies, and the client's credit report may state the amount owed, the time-frame, and the name of the clinic or collection source.

Insurance companies, managed care, and other third-party payers are given information that they request regarding services to the client. Information which may be requested includes type of services, dates/times of services, diagnosis, treatment plan, description of impairment, prognosis, progress of therapy, and summaries.

Information about clients may be disclosed in consultations with other professionals in order to provide the best possible treatment. In such cases the name of the client, or any identifying information, is not disclosed. Clinical information about the client is discussed. Some progress notes and reports are dictated/typed within the clinic or by outside sources specializing in (and held accountable for) such procedures.

In the event in which the clinic or mental health professional must telephone the client for purposes such as appointment cancellations or reminders, or to give/receive other information, efforts are made to preserve confidentiality. Please notify us in writing where we may reach you by phone and how you would like us to identify ourselves. If this information is not provided to us (below), we will adhere to the following procedure when making phone calls: First we will ask to speak to the client (or guardian) without identifying the name of the clinic. If the person answering the phone asks for more identifying information we will say that it is a personal call. We will not identify the clinic (to protect confidentiality). If we reach an answering machine or voice mail we will follow the same guidelines.

◇ **Your Rights**

You have the right to request to review or receive your medical records. The procedures for obtaining a copy of your medical information is as follows: You may request a copy of your records in writing with an original (not photocopied) signature. If your request is denied, you will receive a written explanation of the denial. Records for non-emancipated minors must be requested by their custodial parents or legal guardians.

You have the right to cancel a release of information by providing us a written notice. If you desire to have your information sent to a location different than our address on file, you must provide this information in writing.

You have the right to restrict which information might be disclosed to others. However, if we do not agree with these restrictions, we are not bound to abide by them. In such a case, we would discuss this with you, as well as the legal and/or ethical considerations relevant to such a decision.

You have the right to request that information about you be communicated by other means or to another location. This request must be made to us in writing.

You have the right to disagree with the medical records in our files. You may request that this information be changed. Although we might deny changing the record, you have the right to make a statement of disagreement, which will be placed in your file.

You have the right to know what information in your record has been provided to whom. Request this in writing.

◇ **Complaints**

If you have any complaints or questions regarding these procedures, please contact your primary therapist, or the owner or office manager of this clinic at 479.202.9956. We will get back to you in a timely manner. You may also submit a complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or Arkansas Psychology Board. If you file a complaint, we will not retaliate in any way.