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Notice of Privacy Practices

Confidentiality and privacy are the cornerstones of the mental health professions. Clients expect that their communications with therapists and their treatment records generally will be kept confidential and will not be released to others without their written authorization. One of the purposes of this Notice of Privacy Practices is to inform and educate clients about exceptions to the general rule of confidentiality. Many of these exceptions have existed for years, and many of them are the result of laws and regulations passed by state legislatures and the federal government. These laws and regulations essentially are statements of public policy. My office policies and procedures, as well as the ethical standards of my profession, are intended to shape my practice so that privacy and confidentiality are maintained in a manner consistent with Pennsylvania law and the federal Privacy Rule.

1. I, Lisa B. Schwartz, Ph.D., am the sole practitioner for this practice. I am the one responsible for developing and implementing these policies and procedures.
2. I maintain documentation of all consents, authorizations, notices of privacy practices, office policies and procedures, trainings, and client requests for records or for amendments to records. I also document complaints received and their disposition.
3. Conversations regarding confidential material or information take place in an area and in a manner where they will not be overheard easily. If a conversation occurs on a mobile phone, generally considered to be an insecure device, the person to whom I am speaking will be informed at the beginning of the conversation. I make every effort to keep email correspondence confidential. However, please keep in mind there may be serious confidentiality and reliability issues with electronic communications.
4. Client records are kept in locked file cabinets in my office or in a storage closet.
5. Information and records concerning a client may be disclosed as described in the Notice of Privacy Practices and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. I obtain a written authorization from a client before releasing information to third parties for purposes other than payment and health care operations, unless disclosure is required by law or permitted by law.



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6. If mental health records are subpoenaed by an adverse party, I will assert the psychotherapist-client privilege on behalf of the client and will thereafter act according to the wishes of the client and the client's attorney unless I am ordered by a court or other lawful authority to release records or portions thereof.
7. I keep client records for at least seven years from the date of last treatment. With respect to records of a minor, I keep records for at least seven years or until the client is 21 years old, whichever is longer. Thereafter, I may destroy client records. When records eventually are destroyed, they are destroyed in a manner that protects patient privacy and confidentiality.
8. As early as possible, I attempt to learn from clients whether they have any objection to me sending correspondence to their residence (e.g. invoices) and whether I am permitted to telephone them at their residence or elsewhere to change appointment times and dates, or to discuss matters related to our therapy work.
9. My duties concerning the confidentiality and the psychotherapist-client privilege survive the death of a patient.

I will do my best to ensure that electronic information, such as billing records and correspondence, is protected from computer viruses and unauthorized intruders.