

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.

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Privacy is a very important concern for all those who come to NC Center of Resiliency. It is also complicated because of the many federal and state laws and my professional ethics. Because the rules are so complicated some parts of this Notice are very detailed and you probably will have to read them several times to understand them. If you have any questions, William Calhoun will be happy to help you understand my procedures and your rights. My contact information is listed at the end of this notice.

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 - A. Introduction – To my clients

This Notice will tell you how we handle your medical information. It tells how your therapist uses this information here in this office, how we share it with other professionals and organizations, and how you can see it. We want you to know all of this so that you can make the best decisions for yourself and your family. Because the laws of this state and the laws of the

federal government are very complicated and we don't want to make you read a lot that may not apply to you, we have removed a few small parts. If you have any questions or want to know more about anything in this Notice, please your therapist for more explanations or more details.

B. What we mean by your medical information

Each time you visit our therapists at NCCR or any doctor's office, hospital, clinic, or any other what are called "healthcare providers" information is collected about you and your physical and mental health. It may be information about your past, present or future health or conditions, or the tests and treatment you got from me or from others, or about payment for healthcare. The information we collect from you is called, in the law, PHI which stands for **Protected Health Information**. This information goes into your **medical or healthcare record** or file at my office.

In our office this PHI is likely to include these kinds of information:

- Your history. As a child, in school and at work, marriage and personal history.
- Reasons you came for treatment. Your problems, complaints, symptoms, or needs.
- Diagnoses. Diagnoses are the medical terms for your problems or symptoms.
- A treatment plan. A list of the treatments and any other services which your therapist think will be best to help you.
- Progress notes. Each time you come in we write down some things about how you are doing, what your therapist notices about you, and what you tell them.
- Records we get from others who treated you or evaluated you.
- Psychological test scores, school records, and other reports.
- Information about medications you took or are taking.
- Legal matters
- Billing and insurance information

This list is just to give you an idea and there may be other kinds of information that go into your healthcare record here.

Your therapist uses this information for many purposes. For example, they may use it:

- To plan your care or treatment.
- To decide how well our treatments are working for you.
- When your therapist speaks with other healthcare professionals who are also treating you such as your family doctor or the professional who referred you to me.
- To show that you actually received the services from me which we billed to you or to your health insurance company.
- For teaching and training other healthcare professionals.
- For medical or psychological research.
- For public health officials trying to improve health care in this area of the country.
- To improve the way your therapist does their job in measuring the results of my work.

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 health 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 we can make one for you (but may charge you for the costs of copying and mailing, if you want it mailed to you). In some very rare 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 that something important is missing you can ask your therapist to amend (add information to) your record although in some rare situations we don't have to agree to do that. If you want, we can speak more about this.

C. Privacy and the laws

We are also required to tell you about privacy because of the privacy regulations of a federal law, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). The HIPAA law requires me to keep your Protected Healthcare Information (or PHI) private and to give you this notice of my legal duties and my privacy practices which is called the **Notice of Privacy Practices** (or **NPP**). Your therapist will obey the rules of this notice as long as it is in effect but if NCCR change it the rules of the new NPP will apply to all the PHI we keep. If we change the NPP we will post the new Notice in my office where everyone can see. You or anyone else can also get a copy from us at any time and it will be posted on our website at www.NCCenterforResiliency.com.

D. How your protected health information can be used and shared

When your information is read by me in this office that is called, in the law, “**use**.” If the information is shared with or sent to others outside this office, that is called, in the law, “**disclosure**.” Except in some special circumstances, 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 (shared) and so I will tell you more about what I do with your information.

We use and disclose PHI for several reasons. Mainly, we will use and disclose it for routine purposes and we will explain more about these below. For other uses we must tell you about them and have a written Authorization from you unless the law lets or requires me to make the disclosure without your authorization. However, the law also says that there are some uses and disclosures that don't need your consent or authorization.

1. Uses and disclosures of PHI in healthcare *with your consent*

After you have read this Notice you will be asked to sign a separate **Consent form** to allow me to use and share your PHI. In almost all cases we intend to use your PHI here or share your PHI with other people or organizations to provide **treatment** to you, arrange for **payment** for my services, or some other business functions called health care **operations**. Together these routine purposes are called TPO and the Consent form allows me to use and disclose your PHI for TPO. Take a minute to re-read that last

sentence until it is clear because it is very important. Next I will tell you more about TPO.

1a. For treatment, payment, or health care operations.

We need information about you and your condition to provide care to you. You have to agree to let us collect the information and to use it and share it to care for you properly. Therefore you must sign the Consent form before your therapist begin to treat you because if you do not agree and consent they cannot treat you.

When you come to see us, your therapist will collect information about you and all of it may go into your healthcare records here. Generally, they may use or disclose your PHI for three purposes: treatment, obtaining payment, and what are called healthcare operations. Let's see what these mean.

For treatment

Your therapist uses your medical information to provide you with psychological treatment or services. These might include individual, family, or group therapy, psychological, educational, or vocational testing, treatment planning, or measuring the benefits of my services.

Your therapist may share or disclose your PHI to others who provide treatment to you. They're likely to share your information with your personal physician. If you are being treated by a team they can share some of your PHI with them so that the services you receive will work together. The other professionals treating you will also enter their findings, the actions they took, and their plans into your medical record and so we all can decide what treatments work best for you and make up a Treatment Plan. We may refer you to other professionals or consultants for services we cannot provide. When we do this we need to tell them some things about you and your conditions. Your therapist will get back their findings and opinions and those will go into your records here. If you receive treatment in the future from other professionals I can also share your PHI with them. These are some examples so that you can see how we use and disclose your PHI for treatment.

For payment

Your therapist may use your information to bill you, your insurance, or others so we can be paid for the treatments NCCR provides to you. we may contact your insurance company to check on exactly what your insurance covers. Your therapist may have to tell them about your diagnoses, what treatments you have received, and the changes they expect in your conditions. Your therapist will need to tell them about when we met, your progress, and other similar things.

For health care operations

There are a few other ways your therapist may use or disclose your PHI for what are called health care operations. For example, they may use your PHI to see where they can make improvements in the care and services we provide. Your therapist may be required to supply some information to some

government health agencies so they can study disorders and treatment and make plans for services that are needed. If they do, your name and personal information will be removed from what they send.

1b. Other uses in healthcare

Appointment Reminders. Your therapist may use and disclose medical information to reschedule or remind you of appointments for treatment or other care. If you want me to call or write to you only at your home or your work or prefer some other way to reach you, they usually can arrange that. Just tell them.

Treatment Alternatives. Your therapist may use and disclose your PHI to tell you about or recommend possible treatments or alternatives that may be of help to you.

Other Benefits and Services. Your therapist may use and disclose your PHI to tell you about health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

Research. Your therapist may use or share your information to do research to improve treatments. For example, they may use it when comparing two treatments for the same disorder to see which works better or faster or costs less. In all cases your name, address and other personal information will be removed from the information given to researchers. If they need to know who you are your therapist will discuss the research project with you and you will have to sign a special Authorization form before any information is shared.

Business Associates. There are some operations NCCR hires other businesses to do for us. In the law, they are called my Business Associates. Examples include a copy service we use to make copies of your health records and a billing service who figures out, prints, and mails my bills. These business associates need to receive some of your PHI to do their jobs properly. To protect your privacy they have agreed in their contract with me to safeguard your information.

2. Uses and disclosures that require your *Authorization*

If we use your information for any purpose besides the TPO or those I described above I need your permission on an **Authorization form**. I don't expect to need this very often.

If you do authorize me to use or disclose your PHI, you can revoke (cancel) that permission, in writing, at any time. After that time I will not use or disclose your information for the purposes that we agreed to. Of course, I cannot take back any information I had already disclosed with your permission or that I had used in my office.

3. Uses and disclosures of PHI from mental health records that don't *require* a Consent or Authorization

The law lets me use and disclose some of your PHI without your consent or authorization in some cases. Here are examples of when I might have to share your information.

When required by law

There are some federal, state, or local laws which require me to disclose PHI.

- Your therapist has to report suspected child abuse.
- If you are involved in a lawsuit or legal proceeding and your therapist receives a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process they may have to release some of your PHI. Your therapist will only do so after trying to tell you about the request, consulting your lawyer, or trying to get a court order to protect the information they requested.
- We have to disclose some information to the government agencies which check on me to see that I am obeying the privacy laws.

For Law Enforcement Purposes

Your therapist may release medical information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official to investigate a crime or criminal.

For public health activities

Your therapist might disclose some of your PHI to agencies which investigate diseases or injuries.

Relating to decedents

Your therapist might disclose PHI to coroners, medical examiners or funeral directors, and to organizations relating to organ, eye, or tissue donations or transplants.

For specific government functions

Your therapist may disclose PHI of military personnel and veterans to government benefit programs relating to eligibility and enrollment. I may disclose your PHI to Workers Compensation and Disability programs, to correctional facilities if you are an inmate, and for national security reasons.

To Prevent a Serious Threat to Health or Safety

If your therapist comes to believe that there is a serious threat to your health or safety or that of another person or the public I can disclose some of your PHI. I will only do this to persons who can prevent the danger.

4. Uses and disclosures where you have an opportunity to object

Your therapist can share some information about you with your family or close others. They will only share information with those involved in your care and anyone else you choose such as close friends or clergy. Your therapist will ask you about who you want me to tell what information about your condition or treatment. You can tell them what you want and They will honor your wishes as long as it is not against the law.

If it is an emergency – so I cannot ask if you disagree – We can share information if we believe that it is what you would have wanted and if we believe it will help you if we do share

it. If your therapist does share information, in an emergency, they will tell you as soon as they can. If you don't approve they will stop, as long as it is not against the law.

5. An accounting of the disclosures

When your therapist discloses your PHI they may keep some records of whom they sent it to, when they sent it, and what they sent. You can get an accounting (a list) of many of these disclosures.

E. If you have questions or problems.

If you need more information or have questions about the privacy practices described above please speak to me. My telephone number is listed below. If you have a problem with how your PHI has been handled or if you believe your privacy rights have been violated, contact me. You have the right to file a complaint with me and with the Secretary of the federal Department of Health and Human Services. I promise that I will not in any way limit your care here or take any actions against you if you complain.

If you have any questions regarding this Notice or my health information privacy policies, please contact me, William Calhoun by phone at (919) 323-2071 or by e-mail at business@nccenterforresiliency.com

The effective date of this notice is April 14, 2003