

Northwest Iowa Counseling Associates, P.C.

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NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICE

This document being supplied to you represents our compliance with the Health and Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) passed by congress and enacted into law in August, 1996. This notice describes how medical/mental health information about you may be disclosed, and how you can get access to this information, should you choose. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the information in this notice please feel free to speak with the Privacy Officer, Rhonda Jager-Pippy, LISW. **Please review this information carefully.**

WHO WILL FOLLOW THESE PRACTICES:

This notice describes the privacy practices of **every employee** of the practice who is authorized to enter or see information in your chart.

OUR PLEDGE REGARDING MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION:

This practice will protect the privacy of the records of our clients. We understand the information about you and your health is personal. We are committed to protecting your medical/mental health information. We are required by law:

1. to make sure that your medical information is kept private.
2. to give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to medical/mental health information about you.
3. to follow the terms of this privacy practice.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:

For each category of uses or disclosures of your medical/mental health information, we will explain what we mean and try to give some examples to every use or disclosure in a category will be listed.

For Treatment: We may use medical/mental health information about you to provide you with treatment or services. If you sign release(s) to your medical provider(s), other mental health professionals, or Department of Human Service workers we may disclose information pertinent to your care to your doctor(s) or other individuals who are involved in taking care of you.

For Payment: We may use and disclose treatment information about you so that the treatment and services you receive may be billed and payment collected from your insurance company, or third party payer. We may also tell your health plan about a treatment you are going to receive to obtain prior approval or to determine whether your plan will cover the treatment.

For Health Care Operations: We may use and disclose treatment information about you for office operations. These uses and disclosures are necessary to run the office and make sure that all of our patients receive quality care. For example, we may use file information to review the quality of patient care and to evaluate the performance of our staff in caring for you.

Appointment Reminders: We may use and disclose information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment. You will be asked if you have any preferences in regard to where and when you are contacted.

Health-related benefits and services: We may use and disclose medical information to tell you about health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

Individuals involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care: If you sign a release of information, we may disclose information about you to a friend or family member who is involved in your medical care. If you are a minor child we may disclose treatment information to your parents, that we feel is in your best interest for them to know.

Research: Under certain rare circumstances, we may use and disclose medical information about you for research purposes. We will always ask you your specific written permission if the researcher will have access to your name, address or other information that reveals who are or will be involved in your care.

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As Required By Law: We will disclose medical information about you when required to do so by federal, state or local law.

To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety: We may disclose medical information about you when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and the safety of the public or another person. Any disclosure, however, would only be to someone able to help prevent the threat.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Military and Veterans: If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release medical information about you as required by military command authorities.

Worker's Compensation: We will ask you to sign a release so that we may use and release information about you for worker's compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses.

Public Health Risk: We may use and disclose mental health information about you to public authorities as required by law:

- report births or deaths
- report reactions to medications or problems with medications
- notify the appropriate government authority if we believe a client has been the victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.
- notify the appropriate government authority if we believe a client has been the perpetrator of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.

Health Oversight Activities: We may use and disclose information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs and compliance with civil rights laws.

Lawsuits and Disputes: If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may use and disclose information about you in response to a court or administrative order. We may also disclose information about you in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other process by someone else involved in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request.

Law Enforcement: We may use and disclose medical information if required to do so by a law enforcement official:

- in response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons or similar process;
- to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person;
- about the victim of a crime if, under the limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain person's agreement.
- in emergency circumstances to report a crime; the location of the crime or victims; or the identity, description or location of the person who committed the crime.

Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors: We may use and disclose information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death.

National Security and Intelligence Activities: We may use and disclose information about you to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:

You have the following rights regarding medical information we maintain about you:

Right to Copy: You have the right to a copy of any information in your chart. To obtain a copy of any information, please obtain a request from the office. If you request a copy of the information, we charge a fee for the costs of copying of 5 cents per page and actual cost of mailing. We will provide the records within 10 business days. We may deny your request to a copy in certain very limited circumstances. If you are denied access to medical information, you may request that the denial be reviewed.

Right to Amend: If you feel that the information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you have the right to request an amendment, however, by law, we cannot alter the original information. To request an amendment, please obtain a request form from the Privacy Officer, Rhonda Jager-Pippy. In addition, you must provide a reason that supports your request. We may deny your request for an amendment if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support the request. In addition, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that:

- was not created by us, unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment;

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- is not part of the mental health information kept by the office;
- is not part of the information which would be permitted to inspect and copy; or
- is accurate and complete.

Right to an Accounting of Disclosures: You have the right to request an "accounting of disclosure". This is a list of the disclosures we made of information about you. To request this list of accounting disclosures, please obtain a request from the Privacy Officer, Rhonda Jager-Pippy. Your request must state a time period that may not be longer than six years and may not include dates before 8/1/2004. The first list you request within a 12-month period will be free. For additional lists, we may charge you for the costs of providing the list. We will notify you of the cost involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at the time before any cost is incurred.

Right to Request Restrictions: You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the disclosure of the information in your chart. For example, you could ask that we not disclose the information about past abuse that you experienced to a particular family member. We are not required to agree to your request. If we do agree, we will comply with your request, unless the information is needed to provide you emergency medical treatment.

To request a restriction, please obtain a request form from the Privacy Officer, Rhonda Jager-Pippy. In your request, you must tell us [1] what information you want to limit; and [2] to whom you want the limits to apply; for example, disclosures to your spouse.

Right to Request Confidential Communication: You may request to receive Protected Health Information by alternative means of communication or at alternative locations. To request confidential communications, please obtain a request form from the Privacy Officer. We will not ask you the reason for your request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted.

Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice: You have the right to a paper copy of this notice. You may ask us to give you another copy of this notice at any time.

Right to Designate A Personal Representative: You have the right to designate a Personal Representative who can act on your behalf in regard to your records. This person can make all decisions that you can make only in so far as to handling of your records, not your mental health care. Please obtain a request form from the Privacy Officer, Rhonda Jager-Pippy to designate a personal representative for mental health information. This designation will remain in effect until you change or revoke it in writing.

CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE

We reserve the right to change this notice. We reserve the right to make the revised or changed notice effective for information we already have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. We will post a current notice in the office. The notice will contain the effective date on the first page in the upper left-hand corner.

COMPLAINTS

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with the practice or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with the practice, please contact the Privacy Officer, Rhonda Jager-Pippy or the practice manager, Gary Zeutenhorst at 712-262-6111. All Complaints must be submitted in writing on a special form available from the practice. **You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.**

OTHER USES OF MEDICAL INFORMATION

Other uses and disclosures of mental information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written permission. If you provide us permission to use or disclose medical information about you, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, we will no longer use or disclose medical information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you.

By no means of this Notice intended to supersede or waive your rights under the state laws of Iowa.