



Comprehensive mental health services.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY

Dear Patient:

I will treat what you tell me with great care. My professional ethics (that is, my profession's rules about moral matters) and the laws of this state prevent me from telling anyone else what you tell me unless you give me written permission. These rules and laws are the ways our society recognizes and supports the privacy of what we talk about – in other words, the “confidentiality” of medical treatment.

But I cannot promise that everything you tell me will never be revealed to someone else. There are times when the law requires me to tell things to others. There are also some other limits on our confidentiality. We need to discuss these, because I want you to understand clearly what I can and cannot keep confidential. You need to know about these rules now, so that you don't tell me something as a “secret” that I cannot keep secret. These are very important issues, so please read these pages carefully and keep this copy. At our next meeting, we can discuss any questions you might have.

In all but a few rare situations, your confidentiality (that is, your privacy) is protected by state law and by the rules of my profession. Here are the most common cases in which confidentiality is not protected:

1. If you were sent to me by a court or an employer for evaluation or treatment, the court or employer expects a report from me. If this is your situation, please talk with me before you tell me anything you do not want the court or your employer to know. You have a right to tell me only what you are comfortable with telling.
2. Are you suing someone or being sued? Are you being charged with a crime? If so, and you tell the court that you are seeing me, I may then be ordered to show the court my records. Please consult your lawyer about these issues.
3. **If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or another person, the law requires me to try to protect you or that other person. This usually means telling others about the threat. I cannot promise never to tell others about threats you make.**
4. **If I believe a child has been, or will be, abused or neglected, I am legally required to report this to the authorities.**

Except for the situations I have described above, my office staff and I will always maintain your privacy. I also ask you not to disclose the name or identity of any other client being seen in this office.

My office staff makes every effort to keep the names and records of clients private. My staff and I will try never to use your name on the telephone, if clients in the office can overhear it. All staff members who see your records have been trained in how to keep records confidential.

If your records need to be seen by another professional, or anyone else, I will discuss it with you. If you agree to share these records, you will need to sign a release form. This form states exactly what information is to be shared, with whom, and why, and it also sets time limits. You may read this form at any time. If you have questions, please ask me.

The laws and rules on confidentiality are complicated. Please bear in mind that I am not able to give you legal advice. If you have special or unusual concerns, and do need special advice, I strongly suggest that you talk to a lawyer to protect your interest legally and to act in your best interests.