

# Notice of Privacy Practices

Zimmerman Therapy Group

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## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

**THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.**

**I. OUR PLEDGE REGARDING HEALTH INFORMATION:** We understand that health information about you and your health care is personal. We are committed to protecting health information about you. Your therapist creates a record of the care and services you receive from them. They need this record to provide you with quality care and to comply with certain legal requirements. This notice applies to all of the records of your care generated by this mental health care practice. This notice will tell you about the ways in which we may use and disclose health information about you. We also describe your rights to the health information we keep about you, and describe certain obligations we have regarding the use and disclosure of your health information. We are required by law to:

- Make sure that protected health information ("PHI") that identifies you is kept private.
- Give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to health information.
- Follow the terms of the notice that is currently in effect.
- Let you know promptly if a breach occurs that may have compromised the privacy or security of your information.
- We will not use or share your information other than as described here unless you tell us we can in writing. If you tell us we can, you may change your mind at any time. Let us know in writing if you change your mind.
- We can change the terms of this Notice, and such changes will apply to all information we have about you. The new Notice will be available upon request, in our office.

**II. HOW YOUR THERAPIST MAY USE AND DISCLOSE HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:** The following categories describe different ways that your therapist uses and discloses health information. For each category of uses or disclosures, an explanation and examples will be given. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed. However, all of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of the categories.

**For Treatment Payment, or Health Care Operations:** Federal privacy rules (regulations) allow health care providers who have direct treatment relationship with the patient/client to use or disclose the patient/client's personal health information without the patient's written authorization, to carry out

the health care provider's own treatment, payment or health care operations. Your therapist may also disclose your protected health information for the treatment activities of any health care provider. This too can be done without your written authorization. For example, if a clinician were to consult with another licensed health care provider about your condition, we would be permitted to use and disclose your personal health information, which is otherwise confidential, in order to assist the clinician in diagnosis and treatment of your mental health condition.

Disclosures for treatment purposes are not limited to the minimum necessary standard. Because therapists and other health care providers need access to the full record and/or full and complete information in order to provide quality care. The word "treatment" includes, among other things, the coordination and management of health care providers with a third party, consultations between health care providers and referrals of a patient for health care from one health care provider to another.

**Lawsuits and Disputes:** If you are involved in a lawsuit, your therapist may disclose health information in response to a court or administrative order. Your therapist may also disclose health information about your child in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.

### **III. CERTAIN USES AND DISCLOSURES REQUIRE YOUR AUTHORIZATION:**

1. **Psychotherapy Notes.** Your therapist does keep "psychotherapy notes" as that term is defined in 45 CFR § 164.501, and any use or disclosure of such notes requires your Authorization unless the use or disclosure is:
  1. For your therapist's use in treating you.
  2. For your therapist's use in training or supervising mental health practitioners to help them improve their skills in group, joint, family, or individual counseling or therapy.
  3. For your therapist's use in defending themselves in legal proceedings instituted by you.
  4. For use by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to investigate your therapist's compliance with HIPAA.
  5. Required by law and the use or disclosure is limited to the requirements of such law.
  6. Required by law for certain health oversight activities pertaining to the originator of the psychotherapy notes.
  7. Required by a coroner who is performing duties authorized by law.
  8. Required to help avert a serious threat to the health and safety of others.
2. **Marketing Purposes.** As a psychotherapist, your therapist will not use or disclose your PHI for marketing purposes.

3. **Sale of PHI.** As a psychotherapist, your therapist will not sell your PHI in the regular course of their business.

**IV. CERTAIN USES AND DISCLOSURES DO NOT REQUIRE YOUR AUTHORIZATION.** Subject to certain limitations in the law, your therapist can use and disclose your PHI without your Authorization for the following reasons:

1. When disclosure is required by state or federal law, and the use or disclosure complies with and is limited to the relevant requirements of such law.
2. For public health activities, including reporting suspected child, elder, or dependent adult abuse, or preventing or reducing a serious threat to anyone's health or safety.
3. For health oversight activities, including audits and investigations.
4. For judicial and administrative proceedings, including responding to a court or administrative order, although our preference is to obtain an Authorization from you before doing so.
5. For law enforcement purposes, including reporting crimes occurring on our premises.
6. To coroners or medical examiners, when such individuals are performing duties authorized by law.
7. For research purposes, including studying and comparing the mental health of patients who received one form of therapy versus those who received another form of therapy for the same condition.
8. Specialized government functions, including, ensuring the proper execution of military missions; protecting the President of the United States; conducting intelligence or counterintelligence operations; or, helping to ensure the safety of those working within or housed in correctional institutions.
9. For workers' compensation purposes. Although our preference is to obtain an Authorization from you, your therapist may provide your PHI in order to comply with workers' compensation laws.
10. Appointment reminders and health related benefits or services. Your therapist may use and disclose your PHI to contact you to remind you that you have an appointment with them. They may also use and disclose your PHI to tell you about treatment alternatives, or other health care services or benefits that they offer.

**V. CERTAIN USES AND DISCLOSURES REQUIRE YOU TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT.**

1. Disclosures to family, friends, or others. Your therapist may provide your PHI to a family member, friend, or other person that you indicate is involved in your care or the payment for your health care, unless you object in whole or in part. The opportunity to consent may be obtained retroactively in emergency situations.

**VI. YOU HAVE THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO YOUR PHI:**

1. **The Right to Request Limits on Uses and Disclosures of Your PHI.** You have the right to ask your therapist not to use or disclose certain PHI for treatment, payment, or health care operations purposes. Your therapist is not required to agree to your request, and they may say “no” if they believe it would affect your health care.
2. **The Right to Request Restrictions for Out-of-Pocket Expenses Paid for In Full.** You have the right to request restrictions on disclosures of your PHI to health plans for payment or health care operations purposes if the PHI pertains solely to a health care item or a health care service that you have paid for out-of-pocket in full.
3. **The Right to Choose How Your Therapist Sends PHI to You.** You have the right to ask your therapist to contact you in a specific way (for example, home or office phone) or to send mail to a different address, and they will agree to all reasonable requests.
4. **The Right to See and Get Copies of Your PHI.** Other than “psychotherapy notes,” you have the right to get an electronic or paper copy of your medical record and other information that your therapist has about you. They will provide you with a copy of your record, or a summary of it, if you agree to receive a summary, within 30 days of receiving your written request, and they may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee for doing so.
5. **The Right to Get a List of the Disclosures Your Therapist Has Made.** You have the right to request a list of instances in which your therapist has disclosed your PHI for purposes other than treatment, payment, or health care operations, or for which you provided them with an Authorization. Your therapist will respond to your request for an accounting of disclosures within 60 days of receiving your request. The list they will give you will include disclosures made in the last six years unless you request a shorter time. Your therapist will provide the list to you at no charge, but if you make more than one request in the same year, your therapist will charge you a reasonable cost-based fee for each additional request.
6. **The Right to Correct or Update Your PHI.** If you believe that there is a mistake in your PHI, or that a piece of important information is missing from your PHI, you have the right to request that your therapist correct the existing information or add the missing information. Your therapist may say “no” to your request, but they will tell you why in writing within 60 days of receiving your request.
7. **The Right to Get a Paper or Electronic Copy of this Notice.** You have the right to get a paper copy of this Notice, and you have the right to get a copy of this notice by email. And, even if you have agreed to receive this Notice via email, you also have the right to request a paper copy of it.
8. **The Right File a Complaint if You Feel Your Rights are Violated.** You can complain if you feel we have violated your rights by contacting us using the information on the first page of this document. You can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights by sending a letter to 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C.

20201, calling 1-877-696-6775, or visiting [www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/) (<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/>). We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

*Paperless Standards* We value efficiency and environmental responsibility at Zimmerman Therapy Group. We scan and store all of our documents on a secure online network designed specifically for mental health professionals (Simple Practice). You can view their security features at <https://www.simplepractice.com/security>.

#### EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS NOTICE

This notice went into effect on July 15, 2015

#### Acknowledgement of Receipt of Privacy Notice

Under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), you have certain rights regarding the use and disclosure of your protected health information. By checking the box below, you are acknowledging that you have received a copy of HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices.

**BY CLICKING ON THE CHECKBOX BELOW I AM AGREEING THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREE TO THE ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.**