Privacy Policy

Introduction

Privacy is a critical ethical and often safety issue for clients. This policy outlines the responsibilities of anyone accessing any client information.

General principles

The smallest number of people should access each file to the minimal possible degree. When full confidentiality can't be achieved, anonymity is highly desirable. Oversight of access to client files is to be maintained in whatever ways are practical. The duty for confidentiality sits in balance with the use of team work to improve the quality of the file.

Clinical information

Clinical information should be as minimal as possible to meet the needs of the potential audiences of the file. Enough detail for clinical continuity; clarity and respect of the client's experience; and demonstration that duty of care was discharged in event that the file is reviewed in a legal context. Remember, what you don't have can't be stolen.

Client session summaries, case notes and reports should only be accessed by the treating clinician or a supervisor in event of audit or needing to manage continuity of care. The use of profiles to limit access by non-clinical staff should be engaged.

If a staff member, contractor or client of The Therapy People is found to knowingly and inappropriately access client clinical information it will result in termination of the relationship between The Therapy People and that person as quickly as practical.

Administrative information

Administrative support should be provided by accessing the smallest amount of least revealing information. Notably there is a balance in which administrative staff can improve file quality, be it updating demographic information, moving appointments or ensuring referral documentation is correct. Confidentiality is desirable, as is quality paperwork.

Accounting information

The reconciliation of invoices and payments between the client management and accounting systems often requires some level of access to the client file. Access to the client file should be kept at a minimum recognising the need to balance the responsibilities of accounting to ensure that referrals are correct and payments are made.

Release of information

Clients are entitled to access their files and obtain copies when desired under Freedom of Information. Files can also be subpoenaed by third parties. Whenever possible information should be provided to the client directly. Whether the client passes on the information to the third party is the client's prerogative.

When a subpoena is received the clinician or a supervisor should contact the applicant and seek clarity regarding the information required. Full file subpoenas are often only made to seek a statement of attendance. Negotiation for the withdrawal of a subpoena in exchange for limited information, always with the consent of the client, is generally desirable. Seek specialist supervision for further assistance in responding to subpoenas.

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