



PRACTICE PRIVACY POLICY

COMMITMENT TO PRIVACY

This Privacy Policy outlines how Regain Balance Counselling, Health & Wellbeing collects, stores, uses, and discloses personal information. We take privacy seriously and are committed to complying with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs).

This policy should be read alongside the Counselling Agreement and Informed Consent documentation.

This practice operates in accordance with:

- The Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)
- The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) Code of Ethics
- The Australian Counselling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics and Practice
- Mandatory reporting and legal disclosure obligations under Australian law
- Relevant Commonwealth and State legislation

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of counselling practice. All reasonable steps are taken to safeguard your information and ensure it is handled ethically, lawfully, respectfully, and in accordance with professional standards.

WHAT IS PERSONAL INFORMATION?

Personal information is any information about an individual that can be used to identify them directly or indirectly, including:

- Name, address, telephone number, and email address
- Date of birth and emergency contact details
- Health and wellbeing information
- Referral information
- Clinical notes and assessment information

Sensitive information is a type of personal information that includes health information, racial or ethnic origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, family court orders, criminal history, or other information afforded additional protection under privacy legislation.

WHY WE COLLECT PERSONAL INFORMATION

Personal information is collected to:

- Assess and provide counselling services
- Maintain accurate clinical records
- Fulfil our professional, ethical, legal, and insurance obligations
- Communicate regarding appointments and services
- Coordinate care with other professionals where appropriate and consented to
- Manage administration, billing, and practice operations

As a counselling practice operating under a duty of care, clients cannot remain anonymous. A pseudonym may be used in some circumstances; however, legal identification details may be required where necessary for clinical, legal, or administrative purposes.



HOW WE COLLECT PERSONAL INFORMATION

Personal information may be collected through:

- Intake, consent, and assessment forms
- Counselling sessions
- Telephone conversations
- Email, SMS, and online communications
- Online booking systems
- Referrals from healthcare providers or support services
- Information provided by parents or guardians of clients under 18 years of age
- Other third parties where consent has been provided

Information is collected only where reasonably necessary for the provision of counselling services and associated professional obligations.

STORAGE AND SECURITY OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Reasonable administrative, physical, and technological safeguards are used to protect personal information from misuse, interference, loss, unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure.

This practice uses secure electronic systems, including Halaxy for practice management, client records, appointment administration, invoicing, and secure storage of clinical information, and NovoPsych for clinical assessment, outcome monitoring, treatment planning, and documentation.

These systems utilise Australian-based secure servers and operate in accordance with applicable Australian privacy and security requirements.

Personal information may be stored in both electronic and paper formats. Access is restricted to authorised persons only.

The practice only retains credit or debit card details for the purpose of payment processing for any online or telephone appointments, or for the payment of cancellation or non-attendance fees.

If a privacy breach is suspected or identified, reasonable steps will be taken to investigate, contain, and respond to the incident, including notification where required under Australian privacy legislation.

USE AND DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Personal information is used primarily for the provision of counselling services and associated clinical, administrative, legal, and professional purposes.

Information will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent except where disclosure is:

- Required or authorised by law
- Necessary to lessen or prevent a serious and imminent threat to the life, health, or safety of any person
- Required under mandatory reporting legislation
- Required by subpoena, court order, or other lawful authority
- Necessary to fulfil professional or insurance obligations

Where appropriate, practicable, and safe to do so, any legally required disclosure will be discussed with you.



With your written consent, information may be shared with:

- General Practitioners
- Psychologists, psychiatrists, or other healthcare providers
- NDIS providers or support coordinators
- Schools or educational professionals
- Insurance providers
- Other services involved in your care

Any consent provided will specify the recipient, purpose, and scope of information to be disclosed and may be withdrawn at any time, subject to legal limitations.

It is unlikely that your information will be disclosed to recipients outside Australia.

PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION AND CONSULTATION

To ensure ethical, safe, and effective practice, professional supervision and consultation form part of routine clinical governance and professional requirements under both PACFA and ACA membership standards.

Where client matters are discussed during supervision or professional consultation, information will be de-identified wherever practicable and limited to what is reasonably necessary for professional reflection, quality assurance, risk management, and the maintenance of ethical and competent practice.

DUAL RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY CONTACT

As Regain Balance Counselling operates within regional communities, incidental contact outside the counselling setting may occur.

To protect confidentiality and professional boundaries:

- Clients will not be acknowledged in public unless they initiate contact.
- Confidential information will never be discussed outside counselling sessions.
- Dual relationships are avoided wherever possible and managed carefully when unavoidable.
- Where conflicts of interest arise, referrals or alternative arrangements may be recommended.

Where multiple individuals from the same family, household, or social network attend counselling, confidentiality, impartiality, and professional boundaries will be maintained.

ACCESS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION

You may request access to personal information held about you.

Requests should be made in writing and proof of identity may be required prior to release of information.

Reasonable access will generally be provided within a reasonable timeframe. Administrative fees may apply for preparation and provision of records where permitted by law.



Access may be refused or restricted where permitted under privacy legislation, including circumstances where access may:

- Pose a serious threat to the life, health, or safety of any person
- Unreasonably impact another person's privacy
- Be subject to legal privilege
- Be otherwise restricted by law

CORRECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Reasonable steps are taken to ensure personal information is accurate, complete, current, and relevant.

You may request correction of information that is inaccurate, incomplete, out-of-date, or misleading. Requests will be managed in accordance with privacy legislation.

RECORD RETENTION

Client records are retained in accordance with applicable privacy legislation, legal requirements, insurance obligations, and the ethical standards of PACFA and ACA.

Records are generally retained for a minimum of seven (7) years from the date of last client contact, or longer where required by law, professional obligations, insurance requirements, or where services were provided to a minor.

When records are no longer required to be retained, reasonable steps will be taken to securely destroy or permanently de-identify the information in accordance with privacy legislation, professional standards, and best practice record management requirements.

COMPLAINTS

If you believe your personal information has not been handled in accordance with privacy legislation, please contact Regain Balance Counselling, Health & Wellbeing in the first instance.

Complaints relating to privacy, professional conduct, or ethical concerns will be managed in accordance with applicable legislation and the complaints processes of the relevant professional association where appropriate. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may lodge a complaint with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) website: www.oaic.gov.au

CHANGES TO THIS PRIVACY POLICY

This Privacy Policy may be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect legislative, professional, or operational changes. The most current version will be available upon request.

CONTACT

For questions or concerns regarding privacy matters, please contact:

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