

Client Handout: Confidentiality and Privacy Policy

Confidentiality and Privacy – Governing Law

Maintaining confidentiality of clients and client information is required by law (Privacy Act, 1988). Practitioners are further bound to meet confidentiality and privacy requirements of clients and client information by the Code of Ethics/Ethical Guidelines of their professional registration and governing bodies (e.g., AHPRA, APS, AAPi).

Why Is My Information Collected?

Client details are collected for administration and billing purposes. Note taking and record keeping of personal information is a necessary part of psychological assessment and therapy.

How Will Perception Psychology Mackay Maintain the Confidentiality of My Information?

Any information gathered for administration purposes, including billing information, and all personal information gathered by the practitioner during the provision of the psychological services will remain confidential. All reasonable effort will be expended to ensure records remain secure, e.g., locked filing cabinets, password protected electronic files, secure software programs, locked storage facilities.

Privacy and confidentiality of a client's information will be maintained as a rule - no practitioner or administrative staff member of Perception Psychology Mackay will divulge information to a third party about your attendance at Perception Psychology Mackay, excepting in circumstances required by law (these circumstances are outlined in "Exceptions to Confidentiality").

Exceptions to Confidentiality

There are exceptions in which psychologists are mandated by law to break confidentiality:

- The information given to your psychologist is subpoenaed (officially requested) by a court of law.
- Failure to disclose the information would place you or another person at serious risk of harm.
- Prior approval (verbal or written) has been obtained to a) provide a written report to another professional or agency, e.g., a GP or a lawyer; or b) discuss the material with another person, e.g., a parent or employer.

Children and Young People

Children and young people require consent from a parent or guardian to engage in psychological services until they meet the standard for competency (usually around 14 years of age, depending on the individual's maturity). However, it is still important for the practitioner to maintain the child or young person's confidentiality, i.e., the information discussed during sessions will remain private even to parents and guardians, excepting in the circumstances mandated by law.

NB: Working collaboratively with parents and guardians is necessary to providing effective psychological services to children and young people

Storage

Governing law requires client files to be stored for seven (7) years following their last attendance. If a client is a minor, client files will be stored for seven (7) years following the client's 18th birthday. All reasonable effort will be expended to ensure both electronic and paper files will be stored securely for the required timeframe (i.e., locked filing cabinets, password protected electronic files, password protected software programs, locked storage facilities, etc.).

Other Considerations

RECORDING OF SESSIONS: Perception Psychology Mackay does not routinely record client sessions. If for any reason the practitioner wants to record a client session, appropriate and informed consent will be sought from the client. If a client wishes to record a session, please discuss this with your practitioner.

TELEHEALTH: Unlike face-to-face sessions, telehealth sessions may be vulnerable to reduced privacy due to both online privacy concerns and the possibility of the client being interrupted by others in their environment during a session. By engaging in telehealth appointments, clients are consenting to these risks to confidentiality and privacy. Perception Psychology Mackay will expend all reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality and privacy of telehealth sessions (e.g., password locked meetings, use of telehealth platforms).

COMMUNICATION (INCLUDING EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE): Perception Psychology Mackay utilises email as its primary form of communication with clients and other health providers. All reasonable effort is made to ensure emails are sent to the intended recipients and privacy of client information is maintained. Further, Perception Psychology Mackay utilises an online platform to provide information about bookings and invoices to clients via SMS and Email. All reasonable effort is made to ensure this information is sent to the intended recipients and privacy of client information is maintained.

SUPERVISION: Practitioners are required to engage in regular supervision to meet their registration requirements and to ensure reflective practice. Information about clients (de-identified) may be shared with their supervisors in order to provide effected treatment and improve their clinical practice.

CONFLICTS/DUAL RELATIONSHIPS: It is preferable that your practitioner has no contact/relationship with you in any capacity other than as your psychologist to avoid any possible difficulties in the therapeutic relationship.

However, this practice exists in a regional setting – dual relationships may be inevitable. For example, you might have to interact with a practitioner in a private or public setting (e.g., children attend the same school, you provide services in the community). Alternatively, due to the relative lack of access to services in the Mackay region, you may be aware that a family member or friend has accessed the services of a practitioner at Perception Psychology Mackay.

In circumstances of a possible conflict or dual relationship, Perception Psychology Mackay will not confirm the attendance of any client, and discussion around attendance or on referral to another service is required.