

Notice of Psychologists' Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information

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

I. Uses and Disclosures for Treatment, Payment, and Healthcare Operations.

I may use or disclose your *protected health information (PHI)* for *treatment, payment, and healthcare operations* purposes with your *consent*. To help clarify these terms, here are some definitions.

- “*PHI*” refers to information in your health record that could identify you.
- “*Treatment, Payment, and Healthcare Operations*”
 - *Treatment* is when I provide, coordinate or manage your healthcare and other services related to your healthcare. An example of treatment would be when I consult with another healthcare provider, such as your family physician or another psychologist.
 - *Payment* is when I obtain reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are when I disclose your PHI to your health insurer to obtain reimbursement for your healthcare or to determine eligibility or coverage.
 - *Healthcare Operations* are activities that relate to the performance and operation of my practice. Examples of healthcare operations are quality assessment and improvement activities, business-related matters such as audits and administrative services, and case management and coordination.
- “*Use*” applies only to activities within my office, such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “*Disclosure*” applies only to activities outside of my office, such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

II. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

I may use or disclose PHI for the purposes outside of treatment, payment, and healthcare operations when appropriate authorization is obtained. An “*authorization*” is written permission above and beyond the general consent that permits only specific disclosures. In those instances when I am asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and healthcare operations, I will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information.

I will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your psychotherapy notes. “*Psychotherapy notes*” are notes I have made about our conversations during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which I have kept separate from the rest of your medical record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI.

I will also obtain an authorization from you before using or disclosing your PHI in a way that is not described in this Notice.

You may revoke all such authorizations (of PHI or psychotherapy notes) at any time, provided each revocation is in writing. You may not revoke an authorization to the extent that (1) I have relied on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage, and the law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

III. Uses and Disclosures with Neither Consent nor Authorization

I may use or disclose PHI without your consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

- **Child Abuse:** If I know, or have reasonable cause to believe or suspect, that a child has been abused or neglected, or if I observe any child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, I must immediately report it to the field or regional offices of the Wyoming Department of Family Services or local law enforcement agency, or cause a report to be made.
- **Adult or Domestic Abuse:** If I have reasonable cause to believe that an elderly or disabled adult is being or has been abused, neglected, exploited, or abandoned, or is committing self-neglect, I am required by law to report such information immediately to a law enforcement agency or to the Wyoming Department of Family Services.
- **Health Oversight:** If you file a complaint against me with the State Board of Psychology, I may disclose to them confidential mental health information that is relevant to that complaint.
- **Judicial or Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your diagnosis and treatment and the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I will not release such information without written authorization from you or your legally appointed representative, or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated by a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** I shall not disclose any information communicated for the purpose of diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of any mental or emotional condition or disorder, in the absence of an express waiver of the privilege except where an immediate threat of physical violence against a readily identifiable victim is disclosed to me.
- **Worker's Compensation:** If you file a worker's compensation claim, that is a release of information for the duration of the benefit period, and upon request and notice to you, I must release mental health records pertaining to your injury to the Wyoming Worker's Compensation Division or your employer.
- When the use and disclosure without your consent or authorization is allowed under other sections of Section 164.512 of the Privacy Rule and the state's confidentiality law. This includes certain narrowly-defined disclosures to law enforcement agencies, to a health oversight agency (such as HHS or a state department of health), to a coroner or medical examiner, for public health purposes relating to disease or FDA-regulated products, or for specialized government functions such as fitness for military duty, eligibility for VA benefits, and national security and intelligence.

There may be additional disclosures of PHI that I am required or permitted by law to make without your consent or authorization; however, the disclosures listed above are the most common.

IV. Patient's Rights and Psychologist's Duties

Patient's Rights:

- **Right to Request Restrictions:** You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information about you. However, I am not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- **Right to Receive Confidential Communications by Alternative Means and at Alternative Locations:** You have the right to request and receive confidential communications (PHI) by alternative means and at alternative locations. (For example, you may not want a family member to know that you are seeing me. Upon your request, I will send your bills to another address.)
- **Right to Inspect and Copy:** You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of PHI in my mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the

record. I may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but some cases you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process.

- *Right to Amend:* You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your request. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the amendment process.
- *Right to an Accounting:* You generally have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of PHI regarding you. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.
- *Right to a Paper Copy:* You have the right to obtain a paper copy of the notice from me upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.
- *Right to Restrict Disclosures When You Have Paid for Your Care Out-of-Pocket:* You have the right to restrict certain disclosures of PHI to a health plan when you pay out-of-pocket in full for my services.
- *Right to Be Notified if There is a Breach of Your Unsecured PHI:* You have a right to be notified if: a) there is a breach (a use or disclosure of your PHI in violation of the HIPAA Privacy Rule) involving your PHI; b) that PHI has not been encrypted to government standards; and c) my risk assessment fails to determine that there is a low probability that your PHI has been compromised.

Psychologist's Duties:

- I am required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of my legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- I reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless I notify you of such changes, however, I am required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- If I revise my policies and procedures, I will notify my patients at their next treatment appointment in writing.

V. Questions and Complaints

If you have questions about this notice, disagree with a decision I make about access to your records, or have other concerns about your privacy rights, you may contact Dr. Theresa Faulkner at (307) 684-5828.

If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated and wish to file a complaint with my office, you may send your written complaint to Dr. Theresa Faulkner by mail (PO Box 1222, Buffalo, WY 82834) or by email (drterry@abintrapsych.com).

You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The person listed above can provide you with the appropriate address upon request.

You have specific rights under the Privacy Rule. I will not retaliate against you for exercising your right to file a complaint.

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions, and Changes to Privacy Policy

This notice will go into effect on the first day of your services at Abintra Psychological Associates, LLC.

I reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that I maintain. I will provide you with a revised notice in writing at a patient's next treatment appointment.