

Privacy Policy for Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario

Our Commitment

This Privacy Policy is based on the federal Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act ("PIPEDA"). It governs the commercial relationship between Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario ("we", "us" etc.) and individuals who are our clients or potential clients ("you"). At Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario, we are committed to providing excellent service and to ensuring that our relationship with you is conducted with integrity and in a responsible, fair, honest and ethical manner. Consistent with these objectives, we maintain high standards of confidentiality with respect to the personal information in our possession. If you have any questions about this Privacy Policy or wish to access the personal information in our possession about you, please contact our Information Officer: Christine Sniatala OT Reg. (Ont.).

What is Personal Information?

Personal information is any information about a particular individual, which includes information that relates to their own characteristics (e.g. age, date of birth, home address or phone number, ethnic background, family status), their health (e.g. health history, health conditions, health services received) or their activities and views (e.g. opinions expressed, or evaluations made by others). Of note is that there is a distinction between personal and business information; business information does not fall under the protection of privacy legislation.

Who is Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario?

Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario is a Professional Corporation governed by the laws of Ontario and the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO). The company is a partnership between practicing Occupational Therapists, Christine Sniatala and Lindsay Blackman operating as Lindsay Blackman and Christine Sniatala Occupational Therapy Professional Corporation under the registered business name, Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario. The company may in the future have administrative support working at head office, and Independent Contractor Occupational Therapists that work from home offices or otherwise. We intend to utilize a number of consultants that may, in the course of their duties, have limited access to the personal information we hold. These include: business consultants; a bookkeeper; accountant; office maintenance; computer consultant; temporary workers to cover holidays; cleaners; equipment & systems service workers (e.g. equipment repair or telephone system repair); and lawyers. Their access to personal information is restricted as much as is reasonably possible and we have their assurance that they follow and maintain appropriate privacy principles.

In addition, our facility may on occasion have volunteers or student placements on site. Students may be high school coop placements or may be students from Occupational Therapy programs who are involved in client care under the close supervision of the assigned clinician. During their participation with us, these students would have access to any client information that would be relevant to their role in providing supervised care to these clients.

Primary Purposes of Collecting Personal Information

Clients

Like all Occupational Therapists, we collect, use and disclose personal information such that we may provide effective intervention. For example, we collect information about a client's health history, developmental history, and physical/cognitive/emotional/ behavioral abilities to assist us in assessing that individual's level of independence and ability to function in their environment and to make recommendations regarding intervention needs. Other examples of the type of personal information we collect for this primary purpose include: name, date of birth, previous health assessment results/reports. A second primary purpose is to obtain a baseline of physical/cognitive/emotional information in order to measure response to intervention, changes over time, and to assist in plans for discharge. The information collected would be shared with the pertinent care provider(s). Under rare circumstances, the information may be used or disclosed without the client's conveyed consent in the case of an emergency (e.g. the client is not able to communicate) or where we believe the client would consent if asked and it is impractical to obtain consent (e.g. a family member passing a message from our client and we have no reason to believe that the message is not genuine). Office personnel have limited access to certain types of information in the course of carrying out their administrative duties, but only as is required to deliver on our services (e.g. intake and dissemination of referrals, filing, managing billings, typing dictated reports, proof reading documents). At times, the personal information collected by Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario is shared within our own professional group to allow professionals to consult with one another and to collaborate on programming ideas to optimize service delivery to our clients. Note that all consultants are required to collect, use and store client information as per the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario as per guidelines for record keeping.

Members of the General Public

Members of the general public may contact us to inquire about the occupational therapy services that we provide. In this case, our primary purpose for collecting personal information is to assist us in determining their potential candidacy for accessing service through our facility, to determine how we can best meet their needs. Through collection of this personal information, we may determine that a referral to an alternate service may be more appropriate, thus we may be able to provide that member of the general public with a more appropriate contact. In addition, we may be able to develop specialized programs to suit the needs of inquiring individuals, based on the personal information that they provide (e.g. a number of inquiries or requests for a printing group may result in the organization of such). Any collected information is destroyed if they choose not to proceed with our service. If they do proceed, they become a client and thus the information is used and disclosed in the manner described in Clients. A second primary purpose for collecting personal information is to assist in providing notice of special events or programs through our service (e.g. workshops/educational presentations/group intervention opportunities). In this case, there should be documentation of verbal or signed consent to use personal information in this capacity (e.g. individual indicates they would like our organization to contact them by telephone or by mail out notice of group programs offered in the future). On our website, we only collect the personal information that you provide and only use that information for the purpose that you gave it to us (e.g. to respond to your email message, to send you information on our service).

Contract Staff

A primary purpose for collecting personal information from individuals contracted to do work for us (e.g. Occupational Therapists) is to ensure that they are qualified to provide the services for which they are contracted, and to ensure timely and effective work-related communications (e.g. assigning referrals, relaying messages urgent in nature). A second primary purpose is to ensure that we can contact them in the future (e.g. if inquiries or legal issues were to arise around intervention provided to a client by that contract staff while providing services through Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario). It would be rare for us to collect such information without prior consent, but it might happen in the case of a health emergency (e.g. a SARS/COVID outbreak) or to investigate a possible breach of law (e.g. theft at the clinic). If contract personnel were to require a letter of reference or a verbal reference, information about their work-related performance would be collected and provided only as authorized by them.

Occupational Therapy Students

Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario may offer placements to students entering the field of occupational therapy. Our primary purposes for collecting personal information from students is to ensure adequate knowledge and/or experience to fulfill their role as student; to conduct work-related functions within our organization; and to complete evaluations as required by their educational institution.

Non-Discipline Students and Volunteers

Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario may occasionally offer volunteer placement opportunities for university students. The primary purposes for collecting personal information from these individuals are: for work-related functions; and to provide a reference for future educational training or volunteer opportunities, as requested and authorized by them.

Why do we require your permission?

We collect, use or disclose your personal information only with your consent. Your consent may be express or implied, and you may give it to us in writing, verbally, electronically, or through your authorized representative. When you use our services we consider that you have implied your consent for us to collect, use and disclose your personal information for the purposes identified above. You may withdraw your consent at any time, subject to legal and regulatory restrictions and reasonable notice. We do not provide or sell customer lists to any outside company for marketing, solicitation or any other such purpose. We will not use or disclose your personal information without your consent except in the following circumstances:

When required by law or law enforcement purposes.

- For an emergency that threatens life, health or security.
- To collect a debt that you owe us or to evaluate your credit worthiness.
- To a third party that we have contracted with to work on our behalf in providing services to you or to assist us in understanding your needs and preferences.

Related and Secondary Purposes of Collecting Personal Information

Like most organizations, we also collect, use and disclose information for the purposes related or secondary to our primary purposes. Some related or secondary purposes are externally regulated and we do not have a choice. The most common examples of our related and secondary purposes are as follows:

- To invoice clients for services rendered.
- To process payments for services rendered.
- To invoice third parties for services provided to eligible clients (e.g. motor vehicle insurance, private agencies or schools, Occupational Health and Safety). These third party payers often have your consent or legislative authority to direct us to collect and disclose to them certain information about you in order to demonstrate client entitlement to this funding.
- To provide year-end receipts for taxation purposes.
- To advise clients that their ongoing progress and/or maintenance of acquired skills would be appropriate to review (e.g. after a phase of intervention, a client may be on a hiatus from direct treatment, requiring a reassessment at a later date).
- To conduct a follow-up call subsequent to discharge from the active client caseload to ensure maintenance of acquired skills and to answer any questions or respond to any clinical concerns that may have arisen since the last client contact. We also provide ongoing services for many of our clients over a period of months or years for which our previous records are pertinent.
- To advise clients and others of special programs, educational events, development of a new service that we have available (e.g. upon discharge from individual treatment, a client may be appropriate for a group intervention program; we may contact the client if and when such a group comes available).
- Our clinic reviews client and other documentation for the purpose of quality control – to ensure that we deliver on our vision: that Occupational Therapy becomes recognized for all that it is and all that it can offer as a comprehensive and cost-effective health care solution. Further, our firm, driven by caring, passion and integrity, will lead in the delivery of these services across Ontario. This review includes assessing the performance of all staff and clinicians.
- To complete audits provided by external consultants (e.g. auditors, business consultants, accreditation programs), which may include reviewing client files and interviewing staff and/or contract workers.
- To meet the regulatory policies of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO) who may on occasion inspect our records and interview our staff and clinicians as a part of their regulatory activities in the public interest.
- To report serious misconduct, incompetence, or incapacity of health care professionals.
- To comply with requests made by various government agencies (e.g. Canada Revenue Agency, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Human Rights Commission, etc.) that have the authority to review our files and interview our staff as a part of their mandates. Under these circumstances, we may consult with professionals (e.g. lawyers, accountants) who will investigate the matter and report back to us.

- To conduct a “due diligence” review of Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario records, to ensure that it is a viable business and has been honestly portrayed, in the event that Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario or its assets are sold.

Protection of Personal Information

Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario understands and highly respects the importance of protecting personal information, and have thus taken the following measures:

- Paper information is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area at all times.
- Electronic hardware is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area at all times. Passwords are used on computers and these are locked when not in use.
- Paper information is transmitted through sealed addressed envelopes or packaging by Canada Post or by a bonded and insured courier company and is stamped Private & Confidential.
- Electronic information is transmitted either through a direct fax line with a confidentiality clause or sent through email that either removes client identifiers, uses password protection, or is encrypted. Staff and personnel are trained to collect, use and disclose personal information only as necessary to fulfill their duties and in accordance with our privacy policy.
- External consultants, volunteers and students with access to personal information must enter into written privacy agreements with us.
- Cell phones are digital, with signals more difficult to intercept.

Retention and Destruction of Personal Information

In order to protect your privacy, we do not want to retain personal information for extended periods of time; however, there is a need to keep the information long enough to ensure that we may answer any questions that you may have in the future, specifically about the services you received through our organization. Further, we are obligated, through our external regulatory body, College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO), to retain information per their standards. The College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO) enforces that we keep our client files for 10 years, or in the case of children, 10 years after the 18th birthday. We regularly update contact information related to marketing activities to the general public, and can remove that information immediately if requested to do so. Our contact directories for contract personnel are updated regularly. When a resume is received for a position at our organization and the sender is not hired at that time we may wish to keep the resume on file for potential future positions, unless the candidate indicates otherwise. Contact directories are very difficult to systematically destroy, so we delete such information when we can if it appears that we will not have the need to contact you again. If requested, we will remove such contact information immediately. Paper files containing personal information are shredded. Electronic information is deleted. When electronic hardware is discarded, the hard drive will be physically destroyed.

Accessing Your Information

Although there are a few exceptions, you have the right to see what personal information we retain about you. If asked, we can help you determine what records we may have about you and we will try to assist you in understanding any information that may not be clear to you. Confirmation of identity may be required if we are not familiar with you, prior to providing you with this access. Access should be granted within 30 days unless there is reason for refusal. There may be a nominal fee associated with such requests, as it may require administrative and/or professional clinical time. You may be asked to put your request in writing if your initial request was verbal. If for some reason we are unable to give you access, we will notify you within 30 days if at all possible and will attempt to explain, to the best of our ability, why we are not able to give you access. If you believe there is a mistake in factual information retained, you have the right to ask for it to be corrected. This does not apply to any professional opinions we may have formed. We may request documentation to demonstrate that our files are inaccurate. Where there is consensus that a mistake was made, we will make the correction and notify anyone to whom we sent this information. If there is not a consensus that the information was inaccurate, you may provide a brief statement to be included in our file and we will forward that statement to anyone else to whom we sent the original information.

Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Information Officer:

Christine Sniatala OT Reg. (Ont.).
Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario
PO Box 1507 Waterdown PO, Ontario, L0R 2H0
Phone: 905-741-5769

Formal complaints about our privacy practices may be made in writing to our Information Officer. She will acknowledge receipt of our complaint by telephone or in writing and will ensure that it is investigated promptly. You will be provided with a formal decision and reasons in writing. If you have concerns about the professionalism or competence of our services or staff, we request that you discuss your concerns with us. If we are unable to satisfy your concerns, you are entitled to contact our regulatory body:

College Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO)
20 Bay Street
Suite 900, PO Box 78
Toronto, ON, M5J 2N8
Phone: 1-800-890-6570
Fax: 416-214-1173
www.coto.org

This policy is made under the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). The PIPEDA is a complex Act that provides some additional exceptions to the privacy principles that are too detailed to set out in this document. There are some rare exceptions to the commitments set out above.

For more general inquiries, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Canada oversees the administration of the privacy legislation in the private sector. The Commissioner also acts as a kind of ombudsman for privacy disputes. The Information and Privacy Commissioner can be reached at:

112 Kent Street
Ottawa, ON, K1A 1H3
Phone: (613) 995-8210
Toll Free: 1-800-282-1376
Fax: (613) 947-6850
TTY: (613) 992-9190
www.privcom.gc.ca

Changes to the Privacy Policy

In order to ensure that our Privacy Policy is kept up to date, we reserve the right to change it from time to time. Any changes will be effective thirty (30) days following Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario providing you with notice. Notice of changes to the Privacy Policy may be distributed through our bills, newsletters or may be posted on the Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario website.

Visiting the Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario Website

A visitor to Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario, www.otconnect.ca, is not required to reveal any personal information, such as name, address, or telephone number. Nor is such information collected passively by electronic means. Your personal information is only collected when you voluntarily complete an online application, request form, or survey. Personal information collected during the online application is only used to respond to your inquiries or requests and is not used for any other purposes. We will not send you any unsolicited electronic communication and as per the Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (July 1, 2014) you are required to “opt in” to any communication. Our website does not collect visitor information in the form of the visitor’s domain or Internet Protocol (“IP”) address but does collect information regarding which pages are accessed and from what general geography. This information is used internally, only in aggregate form, to better serve you by helping us manage and improve the content of our website, to structure marketing initiatives, and to diagnose technical problems.

Disclaimer

Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario provides service using a virtual platform called On Call Health. On Call Health meets compliance standards for privacy and confidentiality legislated by both PHIPA and PIPEDA, and advertises that its servers are privately hosted and located in Canada. Please visit the On Call Health webpage for more information about the company’s privacy policy and practices: <https://oncallhealth.ca/>

Providers through Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario are only liable for confidentiality and privacy issues that are a direct result of malpractice. Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario will take reasonable measures, as required by COTO, to protect the security and confidentiality of all electronic information both sent and received.

There are inherent risks associated with using virtual communication for healthcare. Despite reasonable efforts to protect confidential information, it is not possible to completely secure

information. Occupational Therapy Connect Ontario is not responsible for any malware that may impact security, interference from third parties in video calls, or any intercepted information by hackers.