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NOTICE FOR PRIVACY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Updated December 1, 2024

The purpose of this notice is to describe:

- How health information about your child may be used and disclosed
- How you can get access to your child's health information
- How the privacy of your child's health information is important to us
- How we communicate with you

PLEASE REVIEW THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY

OUR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY:

We are required by federal and state law to maintain the privacy of your child's health information. We are also required to give you this NOTICE about our privacy policies and practices, our legal duties, and your rights concerning your child's health information. We will follow the privacy practices described in this NOTICE while it is in effect. This NOTICE will remain in effect until we replace it.

We reserve the right to change our organization's privacy policies and practices and the terms of this NOTICE at any time, as permitted by federal and state law. We reserve the right to make changes in our privacy policies and practices and to make the new provisions effective for all protected health information that we maintain. If changes are made, the new NOTICE will be available upon request and will be posted at our site.

You may request a copy of our notice at any time. For further information about our privacy policies and practices or a copy of this notice, you may contact our privacy officer, Patti Hamaguchi.

In order to maintain the privacy of all client information, no one should enter the receptionist's office unless accompanied by clinic personnel or your child's speech-language pathologist. Family members should be in treatment rooms or observation areas only when accompanying their child.

PATIENT/CLIENT RIGHTS:

- **Access:** You have the right to access your child's health information. You can request to view it and/or have us make photocopies (for a cost) of the information you desire. All requests for access to your child's health information must be in writing and an appointment time will be set. In certain specific circumstances we may deny your request, but we will tell you in writing of our decision and any reason(s) for the denial. Please contact our privacy officer for the required form.

- **Amendment:** You have the right to request that we amend your child's health information. All requests to amend your child's health information must be in writing including an explanation of why you want the record amended. Please contact our privacy officer for assistance. We may deny your request if the information:

- a. was not created by us (e.g. report from another professional),
- b. is not part of the protected health information we keep, or
- c. is determined by us to be accurate and complete.

If we deny the requested amendment, we will tell you in writing how to submit a statement of disagreement or complaint that can become a part of your child's record.

- **Restriction:** You have the right to request additional restrictions regarding our use or disclosure of your child's health information. All requests for additional restrictions to your health information must be in writing. Please contact our privacy officer for assistance. We may deny your request under certain circumstances. The law allows us to disclose information without your authorization in response to:

- a. a court order, subpoena, warrant, or similar process,
- b. health oversight agencies,
- c. report about victims of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence, or
- d. public health activities.

- **Alternative Communication:** You have the right to request that we communicate or send health information to you at an alternate address or by alternate means (e.g. only by phone or in person). All requests for alternative communication regarding your child's health information must be in writing and specify which location or method you want your child's health information communicated by our personnel. Please contact our privacy officer for assistance.

- **Disclosure:** You have the right to a written accounting of the instances in which our agency or our business associates disclosed your child's health information for purposes other than treatment, payment or our agency's operations for records. The list will not include disclosures made for national security purposes or to law enforcement personnel.

USES AND DISCLOSURES OF HEALTH INFORMATION:

We use and disclose health information about your child for treatment, payment, and healthcare operations. For example:

- **Treatment:** With your permission, we may use or disclose your child's health information to other healthcare providers involved in your child's care (i.e. pediatrician, speech therapist, psychologist). We may discuss aspects of your child's therapy program at staff meetings solely for the purpose of coordinating therapy between staff members who concurrently work with your child or to elicit and/or discuss therapy or assessment

methods that other staff SLP's may suggest in order to maximize your child's progress.

- **Office Staff:** Office staff/assistants handle billing and intake information. They sometimes make copies of documents that pertain to your child's program, such as assessment reports, etc. Group assistants may sometimes be made aware of pertinent diagnostic information about a child in order to structure their teaching style appropriately. (e.g. if a child has a hearing impairment or requires signing with verbal directions, etc.) All staff members are required to keep any information about our clients

confidential.

- **Payment:** We may use or disclose your child's health information to assist you to obtain payment for the services we provide you. This may include but is not limited to, evaluation reports, treatment notes or other documentation required by your health insurance company or flexible medical spending account. We use Quickbooks Online to process our payments, with your child's identity, health diagnosis and other personal information contained within the program. Our office staff uploads appropriate diagnostic codes and information related to your child's healthcare.

- **Appointment Software:** We use an online software program (Fusion) that contains protected information about our clients through their portal including intake forms, therapy documentation, and reports. Only staff members with company-provided log in information may access this portal.

- **Email:** We use a HIPAA-compliant email through Google Workspace to communicate with you regarding office closures, therapist's illnesses and schedule changes. Reports that are sent via email from our office are password protected.

- **Phones:** We use a company-based Zoom text/phone program that allows staff to contact our clients without using their personal phones or phone numbers.

- **Staff Devices:** Bright Stars staff are provided with company-provided laptops, phones and iPads so that client-sensitive reports and information is not contained on their personal devices.

- **Healthcare Operations:** We may use or disclose your child's health information as it relates to our healthcare operations. This may include agency operations such as performance or quality improvement activities, training programs (including staff and students), accreditation, certification, licensing or credentialing activities, reviewing the competence or qualifications of our healthcare professionals, and evaluating staff performance.

- **Required by Law:** We may use or disclose your child's health information when we are required to do so by law.

- **Abuse or Neglect:** We may use or disclose your child's health information to appropriate authorities if we have reason to believe that your child is a possible victim of abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or other crimes. We may use or disclose your child's health information to the extent necessary to prevent a serious threat to your child's safety or health or the safety and health of others.

- **Appointment reminders:** We may use or disclose your child's health information to provide you with an appointment reminder by telephone message, voicemail, email, or letter. If you do not wish to have us leave messages about your child's appointment at your work, via email, or any other manner, please let us know.

- **Your authorization:** In addition to our use and disclosure of your child's health information about your child for treatment, payment, and healthcare operations, we may use your information for other purposes with your written authorization, such as videotaping for speech-pathologist's training. You may revoke this authorization at any time with a written request. Revoking your authorization, will not affect any use or disclosures permitted by your authorization while it was in effect. We cannot use or disclose your child's health information for any reason except those described in this NOTICE without your written authorization.

- **Marketing:** We will not use your child's health information for marketing purposes or

communications without your written authorization.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REPORT A PROBLEM:

If you want more information about our privacy practices or have questions or concerns please contact us. If you are concerned that your privacy rights may have been violated or you disagree with a decision we made regarding access to your child's health information or in response to a request you made in writing, please contact our privacy officer to make a complaint. You may also submit a written complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Our privacy officer will provide you with the address to file your complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services upon request.

We support your right to the privacy of your child's health information. We will not retaliate in any way if you choose to file a complaint with us or with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Privacy Officer: Patti Hamaguchi, CEO

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