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Confidentiality of Therapy

In most jurisdictions, conversations between a psychologist and his/her client are considered privileged information, and their content cannot be revealed or discussed with others unless a written release is provided by the client or his/her legal guardian. For example, a client may wish me to discuss his or her therapy with a third person (such as a physician), in which case a specific written consent must be given.

However, there are exceptions to the general rule that therapy conversations are privileged. These are some examples:

- If a client talks about committing suicide, I have a legal obligation to take all possible steps to prevent harm to the client. This may involve notifying law enforcement and others who are equipped to intervene.
- If a client threatens in therapy to harm another person or persons, I have the legal obligation to warn the person(s) threatened, and also to report the threat to law enforcement.
- If a client reveals in therapy that he/she is causing abuse to a child or other person of any age, I am required by law to report the abuse to the appropriate social-services agencies.
- If a client is involved in a legal action, civil or criminal, in which the client's mental health is referenced as a factor, I am legally required to provide all testimony required, even if the client objects.
- If you are using insurance, your insurer will require specific information about dates of service, length of session, diagnosis, etc. Some require lengthy treatment plans and/or discussions with the insurer's staff to determine whether the treatment is covered.