

NOTICE OF PRIVACY POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR THE OFFICE OF TRACIE MORRISON SALMON, LPC, PA

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 Health Care Operations

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

II. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

We may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and health care operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. An “*authorization*” is written permission above and beyond the general consent that permits only specific disclosures. In those instances when we are asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment and health care operations, we will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. We will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your psychotherapy notes. “*Psychotherapy notes*” are notes we have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which we have kept separate from the rest of your medical record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI.

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) We have relied on that authorization for disclosure of PHI; 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

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

- **Child Abuse:** If we have cause to believe that a child has been, or may be, abused, neglected, or sexually abused, we must make a report of such within 48 hours to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, the Texas Youth Commission, or to any local or state law enforcement agency.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If we have cause to believe that an elderly or disabled person is in a state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, we must immediately report such to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.
- **Health Oversight:** If a complaint is filed against us with the State Board of Examiners of Licensed Professional Counselors, they have the authority to subpoena confidential mental health information from us 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 we will not release information, without written authorization from you or your personal or legally appointed representative, or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for 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:** If we determine that there is a probability of imminent physical injury by you to yourself or others, or there is a probability of immediate mental or emotional injury to you, we may disclose relevant confidential mental health information to medical or law enforcement personnel.
- **Worker's Compensation:** If you file a worker's compensation claim, we may disclose records relating to your diagnosis and treatment to your employer's insurance carrier.

IV. Patient's Rights and Therapist's Duties

Patient's Rights:

- 1 *Right to Request Restrictions* – You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information about you. However, we are not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- 2 *Right to Receive Confidential Communications by Alternative Means and at Alternative Locations* – You have the right to request and receive confidential communications of PHI by alternative means and at alternative locations. (For example, you may not want a family member to know that you are seeing us. Upon your request, we will send your bills to another address.)
- 3 *Right to Inspect and Copy* – In most cases, you have the right to inspect and/or obtain a copy of PHI and psychotherapy notes in our mental health and billing records. We may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process.
- 4 *Right to Amend* – You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. We may deny your request. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the amendment process.
- 5 *Right to an Accounting* – In most cases, you have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of PHI for which you have neither provided consent nor authorization (as described in Section III of this Notice). On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.
- 6 *Right to a Paper Copy* – You have the right to receive a paper copy of this notice at any time upon request.

Therapist's Duties:

- 1 We are required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- 2 We reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless we notify you of such changes, however, we are required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- 3 If we revise the policies and procedures, we will provide individuals with a revised notice by mail.

V. Complaints

If you have a complaint, question, or would like additional information regarding this notice or the privacy practices of THE OFFICE OF TRACIE MORRISON SALMON, LPC, P.A., please discuss this with TRACIE MORRISON SALMON, LPC, P.A.

If you are concerned that your privacy rights have been violated, please contact TRACIE MORRISON SALMON, LPC, P.A., or you may file a complaint with:

THE OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
200 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE
S.W., ROOM 509F, HHH BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C., 20201.

There will be no retaliation for filing a complaint with either Tracie Morrison Salmon, LPC, P.A., or with The Office for Civil Rights.

VI. Effective Date

This notice will go into effect on April 14, 2003.