

The Effective Date of This Notice is April 14, 2003.

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

Notice of Privacy Practices - or NPP

When you visit a healthcare provider, the health information that you provide is private information. But there are circumstances when some portion of that information might be shared. These circumstances generally fall within three broad categories. The three broad categories fall under the headings of 1) treatment, 2) payment for services rendered, and 3) other health care information. Each category is explained below. Each of these categories also requires your consent. Since each of these categories is also necessary if you are to receive the treatment and/or services that you are seeking, there will be an accompanying consent form that you will be asked to sign. This consent form is a way of showing that you understand how your private health information can be used, and that you are consenting to have the healthcare provider(s) you are seeing Christina Zampitella, Psychologist PC, use the information for these purposes.

The first of the three categories refers to matters related to your treatment and/or the services you are requesting.

- In order to provide you with the type of treatment or services you are requesting, a healthcare provider might feel that it's important to contact, with your consent, other professionals (physicians, therapists or others) who are providing services to you now, or who have provided services to you in the past.
- Sometimes, you will actually be the one initiating this contact. Let's say, for example, that you want your health care provider to communicate information with another doctor, facility or school. In those instances (you'll actually be asked to sign a written release of information allowing the provider to do so), the health care provider will usually communicate with the person or persons you wish.

The second broad category refers to payment for services. These typically refer to instances where you are requesting that your health care provider determine whether your insurance will reimburse you for some portion of the treatment and/or services you are requesting.

- In these instances, the insurance company may ask the health care provider or the provider's representative information about the condition that you are being treated for. Typically, for example, they want to know your diagnosis. And if you wish the insurance company to reimburse you or the healthcare provider for ongoing services, they may ask the provider for periodic updates about your progress, to determine whether they will be able to provide this reimbursement.

- The representative who is going to answer any questions you might have about payments for services, and who will research any questions you have regarding your insurance company's reimbursement for services, is the billing service, Katie Tone. She will also be handling the billing for services that are rendered. By giving your consent to this healthcare provider's privacy practices, you are also consenting to Christina Zampitella, Psychologist PC handling matters regarding billing, questions regarding insurance reimbursement, and questions regarding payments for services rendered.

The third broad category refers to other health care information. Generally, this covers things that a healthcare provider's office does to improve the level of care that's provided. The following examples could fall under this third broad category.

- Let's say your provider arranges for you to be called at home to remind you of an upcoming appointment. To do this, your therapist has access to your home telephone number, or other identifying information needed to contact you. At our office, it is usually the same psychologist or psychological assistant who handle your therapy, assessment, and/or billing. Consenting to this healthcare provider's privacy practices shows that you agree to having Christina Zampitella, Psy.D., or in the employee's absence, another healthcare provider at the office, remind you of an upcoming appointment.
- There are times when a healthcare provider is away from the office and unavailable. On these occasions, the healthcare provider arranges for another healthcare provider to handle any emergencies that might arise. On these occasions, it therefore may become necessary for this other healthcare provider to have access to your private health care information. Your consent to these privacy practices shows that you understand the need for this, and that you also agree with this practice.
- Healthcare providers are also sometimes asked to assist with research projects related to conditions and/or services that they provide. We may at some point ask if you would like to volunteer for one of these projects. If you do, you will be fully informed before hand about the project, the information that will be collected, and how personal identities of volunteers will be protected. You will also be asked to sign a separate authorization indicating your agreement to participate in the project.
- Should the healthcare provider ever contract with an outside service to do things like provide billing services, someone other than the healthcare provider will see some of your private health information. Outside services like these are referred to as **Business Associates**. To protect your privacy, any outside service or business associate is requested, as part of their contract, to agree to the healthcare provider's privacy policies.

As mentioned, the three categories just described fall under the headings of 1) treatment; 2) payment; and 3) other health care information. Their corresponding initials are TPO. In the future, when referring to private health information requiring your consent, you will simply see the initials TPO. When you do, know that they refer to the three broad categories described above.

Uses and Disclosure Requiring Your Authorization

In rare instances, there may come a time when a healthcare provider wishes to use private health information for reasons other than TPO. Should this ever arise, your written permission will be required. You will be asked to sign what's known as an authorization form.

In signing an authorization form, you are permitted to cancel the authorization at any time. If you cancel your authorization, no further information will be disclosed. There will be no way, however, to take back any information that you already agreed to disclose or that had already been used for the reasons you had previously agreed to.

Uses and Disclosures of Private Health Information That Does Not Require Consent or Authorization

There are also instances where doctors, clinicians and other health care providers are required by law to share information that clients may have provided without requiring your consent or authorization. Here are four examples:

- If a client's life is in danger, or if a client is intending to endanger the life of another person, healthcare providers are required to share information that can prevent or reduce the threat of serious harm to the client whose life is in danger, or to the person that the client is intending to seriously harm.
- Also, if a healthcare provider suspects that a child is being physically or sexually abused, or that a child is being exposed to domestic violence, the provider is required by law to call appropriate authorities in your community.
- Healthcare providers are also required to release some portion of information provided to them by a client when the court issues a subpoena, requesting this information. Typically, a subpoena arises out of a lawsuit or other legal proceeding that a client is involved in.
- Governmental agencies responsible for monitoring privacy practices may want to check with healthcare providers on the status of their privacy practices. When doing so, they may request some portion of a client's medical information from a healthcare provider.

When directed to do so by a court of law, health care providers can also be asked to release information to law enforcement officials when they are investigating a crime or a criminal.

Healthcare providers are also sometimes asked to disclose personal health information of military personnel and veterans to government benefit programs relating to eligibility and enrollment, to Workers' Compensation programs, to correctional facilities if you are an inmate, and for national security reasons.

Uses and Disclosures Requiring You to Have an Opportunity to Object

If it is an emergency - such that your health care provider has no way to know whether you agree or disagree – the provider can share information if the provider believes that it is what you would have wanted, and if the provider believes that sharing the information can help you. You will learn of the information that was shared as soon as possible. If you don't approve, no further information will be shared. The exception to this though, is if sharing the information is required by law.

You might also request that a health care provider share information about you to others in your family or others whom are close to. You will tell the health care provider who these others are, and the nature of the information that you wish to share. Your wishes will be honored here. The only exception, once again, is when a health care provider has an obligation to share information required by law.

An Accounting of Disclosures

When a health care provider discloses private health care information, there is a record kept of the disclosure. You can speak to your health care provider or his/her representative about these disclosures

What is Meant By Protected Health Information

Any person who has ever visited a doctor has provided that doctor with protected health information. In its broadest sense, protected health information (or PHI) refers to information that you provide to a doctor, therapist or other health care provider that relates in any way to the treatment or services that you seek. Typically, this information goes into a client record or into a file. Usually, this record or file includes things like the following:

- Your history, including childhood history, school history, marital history and personal history.
- Reasons that brought you to the provider. These include things like the symptoms you are experiencing, or the goals that you wish to achieve.
- Diagnoses – both past and present.
- Information pertaining to any medications you are taking now or have taken in the past.

- Ongoing information related to your treatment or the services you are receiving, if they are ongoing.
- Information provided to us by previous providers at your request.

This information is kept in a provider's file in a secure file cabinet.

A healthcare provider uses the medical, historical, diagnostic and other information collected above for different purposes. They include:

- To plan the care and services you requested.
- To see how well treatment or services are progressing.
- To coordinate with other healthcare providers, at your request, who also are involved in your care.
- To improve our services by measuring the results of our efforts.
- For research purposes, with your prior consent.
- For teaching and training of other professionals.

Separate from this information that is stored in the medical record or file, is the information that you provided to the health care provider allowing the provider to bill for services rendered. This is the information the health care provider's office uses to send you the statements that you receive in the mail. If you asked the provider to bill your insurance, this also contains the information the insurance company needs in order to reimburse you or the health care provider for services rendered. This information is also necessary to show health insurance companies the actual dates that services were rendered.

Information used for billing purposes is kept in a separate file and in a different location from the file that contains information pertaining to your treatment or services. This is because you may have a question from time to time about your bill that the healthcare provider's office manager or representative can answer. The healthcare provider wants the office staff to be able to answer these or other related questions regarding billing without accessing the file that contains confidential information pertaining to your actual care.

Other Things to Keep In Mind About Your Protected Health Information or PHI

Although your health care record is the physical property of the healthcare provider, the information belongs to you. You can inspect it, read it and review it. You can also request that a provider arrange to have the information photocopied. You might be asked to pay for the cost of photocopying in these instances.

If you find anything in your record that is incorrect, or something that's missing, you can ask to have it amended. In rare instances, a healthcare provider may disagree with you, and feel the information should remain as is. But again, these instances are rare.

In rare instances as well, there may also be notes or other information contained in your file that a healthcare provider does not want divulged to anybody – including the client. Your healthcare provider or his/her representative can share with you the rare instances when this can occur.

Notice of Privacy Practices and HIPAA

The HIPAA law requires healthcare providers to keep PHI private and to give clients or patients seeking their services a notice of the healthcare provider's privacy practices and legal duties. This notice is referred to as the **Notice of Privacy Practices** or **NPP**. The information provided in the pages above is this healthcare provider's **NPP**.

These privacy practices are in effect as of **April 14, 2003**. It's possible that new privacy practices will be adopted in the future. If any new privacy practices are adopted that apply to the treatment or services you are receiving, you will be notified of these changes.

If You Have Questions or Problems

In large medical centers or large group practices, there will be what's known as a Privacy Officer to answer any questions you might have regarding your private health information. But in small or solo practices, the health care provider will often serve as the Privacy Officer. So, you need more information or have questions about the privacy practices described above, please speak to your health care provider, or to a person designated by the provider to answer these questions.

If you have a problem with how your private health information has been handled, or if you believe your rights have been violated, contact the health care provider or the person they designated to handle any problems that might arise. You have a right to file a complaint. The health care provider will try his/her best to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. You can also file a complaint with the Secretary of the Federal Department of Health and Human Services.

If you have any questions regarding this notice or the health provider's privacy policies, please contact this provider who is Christina Zampitella, Psy.D., FT. The provider can be reached at 858-268-9800.

Consent to Healthcare Providers Notice of Privacy Practice or NPP

This consent form is intended to show that you read and understand the privacy practices of the healthcare provider you are seeing, whose name is Christina Zampitella, Psy.D.. This consent also shows that you agree with these privacy practices.

Your healthcare provider needs your consent here in order to provide you or a member of your family with the services that you are requesting.

After you have signed this consent, you have the right to revoke it at any time. Simply write your healthcare provider a letter telling the provider of this.

Client: _____ Birth date of Client: _____

Signature of client or client's personal representative Date

Printed name of client or client's personal representative Relationship to client

Description of Personal representative's authority

Copy given to the client/parent/personal representative _____