

# **CHARLESTOWNE COUNSELING ASSOCIATES AND INDEPENDENT PROVIDERS**

## **SOUTH CAROLINA PRIVACY NOTICE FORM**

### **Notice of Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information**

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW CLINICAL 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 psychologist.
  - *Payment* is when we obtain reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are 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, clinic, practice group, etc.] such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “*Disclosure*” applies to activities outside of our [office, clinic, practice group, etc.], 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; 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:** When in our professional capacity, we have received information which gives me reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect, we must report such to the county Department of Social Services, or to a law enforcement agency in the county where the child resides or is found. If we have received information in our professional capacity which gives us reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by acts or omissions that would be child abuse or neglect if committed by a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, but we believe that the act or omission was committed by a person other than the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, we must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If we have reason to believe that a vulnerable adult has been or is likely to be abused, neglected, or exploited, we must report the incident within 24 hours or the next business day to the Adult Protective Services Program. We may also report directly to law enforcement personnel.

- **Health Oversight:** The South Carolina Board of Examiners has the power, if necessary, to subpoena our records. We are then required to submit to them those records relevant to their inquiry.
- **Judicial or administrative proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made about the professional services we provided you or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and we will not release information without your written consent 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 you communicate to us the intention to commit a crime or harm yourself, we may disclose confidential information when we judge that disclosure is necessary to protect against a clear and substantial risk of imminent serious harm being inflicted by you on yourself or another person. In this situation, we must limit disclosure of the otherwise confidential information to only those persons and only that content which would be consistent with the standards of the profession in addressing such problems.
- **Workers' Compensation:** If you file a workers' compensation claim, we are required by law to provide all existing information compiled by me pertaining to the claim to your employer, the insurance carrier, their attorneys, the South Carolina Worker's Compensation Commission, or you.

#### **IV. Patient's Rights and Therapist's Duties**

##### **Patient's Rights:**

- *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.
- *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 me. Upon your request, we will send your bills to another address.)
- *Right to Inspect and Copy* – You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of PHI in our mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. 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.

- *Right to Amend* – You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your request. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the amendment process.
- *Right to an Accounting* – You generally have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of PHI regarding you. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.
- *Right to a Paper Copy* – You have the right to obtain a paper copy of the notice from me upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically

### **Therapist's Duties:**

- 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.
- 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.
- If we revise our policies and procedures, we will provide you with a revised notice that we will review and sign together.

### **V. Complaints**

If you are concerned that we have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we made about access to your records, you may contact , Executive Director/Privacy Officer (843) 766-8620 or file inquires with its Board of Examiners in Psychology or Board of Social Work at PO Box 11329, Columbia, SC 29211-1329.

You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The person listed above can provide you with the appropriate address upon request.

### **VI. Effective Date, Restrictions and Changes to Privacy Policy**

This notice will go into effect on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003.

We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that we maintain. We will provide you with a revised notice by US mail or in person.