

Lorraine B. Wodiska, PhD, CGP, ABPP-F, AGPA-F
6014 28th Street North
Arlington, VA 22207

Phone: (703) 536-5545
Email: lwodiska@gmail.com
Website: lorrainewodiskaphd.com

Notice of Psychologists' Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Patient's Health Information (HIPAA)

This Notice Describes how Psychological and Medical Information about You May Be Used and Disclosed and How You Can Get Access to this Information.

I. Uses and Disclosures for Treatment, Payment and Health Care Operations

I may *use* or *disclose* your *protected health information (PHI)*, for *treatment, payment and health care operations* purposes with your *written authorization*. 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 I provide, coordinate or manage your health care and other services related to your health care. An example of treatment would be when I consult with another health care provider, such as your family physician or another psychologist.
 - “*Payment*” is when I obtain reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are when I 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 my 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 my office such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “*Disclosure*” applies to activities outside my office such as releasing, transferring or providing access to information about you to other parties.
- “*Authorization*” is your written permission to disclose confidential mental health information. All authorizations to disclose must be on a specific legally required form.

II. Other Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

I may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment or health care operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. In those instances when I am asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment, or health care operations, I will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. I will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your Psychotherapy Notes. “*Psychotherapy Notes*” are notes I have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session. I have kept these notes 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 at any time, provided each revocation is in writing. You may not revoke an authorization to the extent that (1) I have relied on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage. The law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

III. Uses and Discloses without Authorization

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

- *Child Abuse* – If I have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, I must report this belief to the appropriate authorities.
- *Adult and Domestic Abuse* – I may disclose protected health information regarding you if I reasonably believe that you are a victim of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- *Judicial and Administrative Proceedings* – If I receive a subpoena from the Virginia Board of Psychology or the Maryland Board of Examiners of Psychologists because they are investigating my practice, I must disclose any PHI requested by the Board.
- *Serious Threat to Health or Safety* – If you communicate to me a specific threat of imminent harm against another individual or if I believe that there is clear, imminent risk of physical or mental injury being inflicted against another individual, I may make disclosures that I believe are necessary to protect that individual from harm. If I believe that you present an imminent, serious risk of physical or mental injury or death to yourself, I may make disclosures I consider necessary to protect you from harm.

IV. Patients Rights and Psychologist’s Duties

Patients’ Rights:

- *Right to Request Restrictions* – You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information. However, I am 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. On your request, I 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 my mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases you may have this decision reviewed. You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of Psychotherapy Notes unless I believe the disclosure of the record will be injurious to your health. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process for both PHI and Psychotherapy Notes.
- *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, I 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. On your request, I 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.

Psychologist's Duties:

- I am required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of my legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- I reserve the right to change privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless I notify you of such changes, however, I am required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- If I revise my policies and procedures I will provide you with a revised notice.

V. Complaints

If you are concerned that I have violated your privacy rights or if you disagree with a decision I made about access to your records you may contact me.

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

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions and Changes to Privacy Policy

This notice went into effect on April 14, 2003.

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