

HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act)
Concerning the counseling office of Erin Skinner, LMSW

This **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)** 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. *NOTE: The terms CLIENT and PATIENT are interchangeable in all of the following document.*

_____ This mental health practice is required by law to:

- Maintain the privacy of protected health information;
- Give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices regarding health information about you;
- Follow the terms of our notice that is currently in effect.

How we may use and disclose health information

The following are the ways we may use and disclose health information that identifies you ("Health Information"). Except for the following purposes, we will use and disclose Health Information only with your written permission. You may revoke such permission at any time by writing to my practice's privacy officer.

Treatment. We may use and disclose Health Information for your treatment and to provide you with treatment-related health care services. For example, we may disclose Health Information to doctors, nurses, technicians, or other personnel, including people outside our office, who are involved in your medical care and need the information to provide you with medical care.

Payment. We may use and disclose Health Information so that others or we may bill and receive payment from you, an insurance company, or a third party for the treatment and services you received. For example, we may give your health plan information so that they will pay for your treatment.

Health Care Operations. We may use and disclose Health Information for health care operation purposes. These uses and disclosures are necessary to make sure that all of our clients receive quality care and to operate and manage our office. For example, we may use and disclose information to make sure the counseling care you receive is of the highest quality. We also may share information with other entities that have a relationship with you (for example, your health plan) for their health care operation activities.

Appointments. We may use and disclose Health Information to contact you and to alert you to any changes in an appointment time with us due to emergencies in scheduling.

Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care.

When appropriate, we may share Health Information with a person who is involved in your medical care or payment for your care, such as your family or a close friend. We also may notify your family about your location or general condition or disclose such information to an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort.

Special Situations

As Required by Law. We will disclose Health Information when required to do so by international, federal, state, or local law. The Office of Civil Rights has the right to inspect your patient file in enforcing compliance with HIPAA Health Insurance Portability & Accountability ACT).

To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety. We may use and disclose Health Information when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of the public or another person. Disclosures, however, will be made only to someone who may be able to help prevent the threat.

Licensed Professional Counselor Code Sec. 681.32 (m): A licensee shall take reasonable action to inform medical or law enforcement personnel if the professional determines there is a probability of imminent physical danger by the client / patient to the client / patient or others.

Business Associates. We may disclose Health Information to our business associates that perform functions on our behalf or provide us with services if the information is necessary for such functions or services. For example, we may use another company to perform billing services on our behalf. All of our business associates are obligated to protect the privacy of your information and are not allowed to use or disclose any information other than as specified in our contract.

Military and Veterans. If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release Health Information as required by military command authorities. We also may release Health Information to the appropriate foreign military authority if you are a member of a foreign military.

Workers' Compensation. We may release Health Information for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

Public Health Risks. We may disclose Health Information for public health activities. These activities generally include disclosures to prevent or control disease, injury, or disability; report births and deaths; report child abuse or neglect; report reactions to medications or problems with products; notify people of recalls of products they may be using; inform a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition; and report to the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. We will only make this disclosure if you agree or when required or authorized by law.

Health Oversight Activities. We may disclose Health Information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights laws. The Office of Civil Rights has the right to inspect your patient file in enforcing compliance with HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability & Accountability ACT).

Lawsuits and Disputes. If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may disclose Health Information in response to a court or administrative order. We also may disclose Health Information in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.

Law Enforcement. We may release Health Information if asked by a law enforcement official if the information is: 1) in response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons, or similar process; 2) limited information to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person; 3) about the victim of a crime even if, under certain very limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement; 4) about a death we

believe may be the result of criminal conduct; 5) about criminal conduct on our premises; and 6) in an emergency to report a crime, the location of the crime or victims, or the identity, description, or location of the person who committed the crime.

National Security and Intelligence Activities. We may release Health Information to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counter-intelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law.

Protective Services for the President and Others. We may disclose Health Information to authorize federal officials so they may provide protection to the President, other authorized persons or foreign heads of state, or to conduct special investigations.

Inmates or Individuals in Custody. If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement official, we may release Health Information to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be made if necessary: 1) for the institution to provide you with health care, 2) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety and security of the correctional institution.

Your rights

You have the following rights regarding Health Information we have about you:

Right to Inspect and Copy. You have the right to inspect and copy Health Information that may be used to make decisions about your care or payment for your care. This includes medical and billing records, other than psychotherapy notes. To inspect and copy this Health Information, you must make your request, in writing, to our privacy officer.

Right to Amend. If you feel that Health Information we have is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for our office. To request an amendment, you must make your request, in writing, to our privacy officer.

Right to an Accounting of Disclosures. You have the right to request a list of certain disclosures we made of Health Information for purposes other than treatment, payment, and health care operations or for which you provided written authorization. To request an accounting of disclosures, you must make your request, in writing, to our privacy officer.

Right to Request Restrictions. You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the Health Information we use or disclose for treatment, payment, or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the Health Information we disclose to someone involved in your care or the payment of your care, like a family member or friend. For example, you could ask that we not share information about a particular diagnosis or treatment with your spouse. To request a restriction, you must make your request, in writing, to our privacy officer. **We are not required to agree to your request.** If we agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you with emergency treatment.

Right to Request Confidential Communication. You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we contact you only by mail or at work. To request confidential communication, you must make your request, in writing, to our privacy officer. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted. We will accommodate reasonable requests.

Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice. You have the right to a paper copy of this notice. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time.

Changes to this notice

We reserve the right to change this notice and make the new notice apply to Health Information we already have as well as any information we receive in the future. We will post a copy of our current notice at our office.

Complaints

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our office or with the following licensing boards:

**Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners
Texas Department of State Health Services
Mail Code 1982
P.O. Box 149347
Austin, Texas 78714-9347
Email: lsw@dshs.state.tx.us
Telephone: (512) 719-3521
Fax: (512) 834-6677**

To file a complaint with our office, contact our privacy officer. All complaints must be made in writing. You will **not** be penalized for filing a complaint.

Wood Christian Counseling
Attn: Erin Skinner, LMSW
3800 Paluxy Dr. Ste. 240
Tyler, Texas 75703
Office: (903) 283.8729 * Fax: (888) 454.9083