



Informed Consent for Therapy Services (Minor)

Privacy of Information Shared in Counseling/Therapy: Your Rights and My Policies

What to expect:

The purpose of meeting with a counselor or therapist is to get help with problems in your life that are bothering you or that are keeping you from being successful in important areas of your life. You may be here because you wanted to talk to a counselor or therapist about these problems. Or, you may be here because your parent, guardian, doctor or teacher had concerns about you. When we meet, we will discuss these problems. I will ask questions, listen to you and suggest a plan for improving these problems. It is important that you feel comfortable talking to me about the issues that are bothering you. Sometimes these issues will include things you don't want your parents or guardians to know about. For most people, knowing that what they say will be kept private helps them feel more comfortable and have more trust in their counselor or therapist. Privacy, also called confidentiality, is an important and necessary part of good counseling.

As a general rule, I will keep the information you share with me in our sessions confidential, unless I have your consent to disclose certain information. There are, however, important exceptions to this rule that are important for you to understand before you share personal information with me in a therapy session. In some situations, I am required by law, or by the guidelines of my profession, to disclose information whether or not I have your permission. I have listed some of these situations below.

Confidentiality cannot be maintained when:

- ▷ You tell me you plan to cause serious harm or death to yourself, and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat. I must take steps to inform a parent or guardian about what you have told me and how serious I believe this threat to be. I must make sure that you are protected from harming yourself.
- ▷ You tell me you plan to cause serious harm or death to someone, and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat. In this situation, I must inform your parent or guardian, and I may inform authorities and/or the person whom you intend to harm.
- ▷ In the event you pose a threat to yourself or someone else, I will have to initiate a Baker Act, which requires you to have a voluntary or involuntary evaluation completed at a local hospital. When a Baker Act is initiated, I will have to provide information about you to the individual who transports you to the hospital and to the hospital treatment team.
- ▷ You are doing things that could cause serious harm to you or someone else, even if you do not *intend* to harm yourself or another person. In these situations, I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether a parent or guardian should be informed.

- ▷ You tell me you are being abused - physically, sexually or emotionally - or that you have been abused in the past. In this situation, I am required by law to report the abuse to the Florida Department of Children and Families.
- ▷ You are involved in a court case and a request is made for information about your counseling or therapy. If this happens, I will not disclose information without your written agreement *unless* the court requires me to. I will do all I can within the law to protect your confidentiality, and if I am required to disclose information to the court, I will inform you that this is happening.

Communicating with your parent(s) or guardian(s):

Except for situations such as those mentioned above, I will not tell your parent or guardian specific things you share with me in our private therapy sessions. This includes activities and behavior that your parent/guardian would not approve of - or would be upset by - but that do not put you at risk of serious and immediate harm. However, if your risk-taking behavior becomes more serious, then I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether you are in serious and immediate danger of being harmed. If I feel that you are in such danger, I will communicate this information to your parent or guardian.

Example: If you tell me that you have tried alcohol at a few parties, I would keep this information confidential. If you tell me that you are drinking and driving or that you are a passenger in a car with a driver who is drunk, I would not keep this information confidential from your parent/guardian. If you tell me, or if I believe based on things you've told me, that you are addicted to alcohol, I would not keep this information confidential.

Example: If you tell me that you are having protected sex with a boyfriend or girlfriend, I would keep this information confidential. If you tell me that, on several occasions, you have engaged in unprotected sex with people you do not know or in unsafe situations, I will not keep this information confidential. You can always ask me questions about the types of information I would disclose. You can ask in the form of "hypothetical situations," in other words: "If someone told you that they were doing _____, would you tell their parents?"

Even if I have agreed to keep information confidential - to not tell your parent or guardian - I may believe that it is important for them to know what is going on in your life. In these situations, I will encourage you to tell your parent/guardian and will help you find the best way to tell them. Also, when meeting with your parents, I may sometimes describe problems in general terms, without using specifics, in order to help them know how to be more helpful to you.

Communicating with other adults:

School

I will not share any information with your school unless I have the permission from your parent or guardian. Sometimes I may request to speak to someone at your school to find out how things are going for you. Also, it may be helpful in some situations for me to give suggestions to your teacher or counselor at school. If I want to contact your school, or if someone at your

school wants to contact me, I will discuss it with you first and request your permission. A very unlikely situation might come up in which I do not have your permission but either I or your parent or guardian believe that it is very important for me to be able to share certain information with someone at your school. In this situation, I will use my professional judgment to decide whether to share any information.

Doctors

Sometimes your doctor and I may need to work together; for example, if you need to take medication in addition to seeing a counselor or therapist. I will get permission from your parent/guardian in advance to share any information with your doctor. The only time I will share information with your doctor even if I don't have your permission is if you are doing something that puts you at risk for serious and immediate physical/medical harm.

Other information:

Appointments

It is your responsibility to arrive to your session on time. If you arrive late, it is possible that your appointment will still end at the scheduled time.

Cancellations

If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I ask that you provide me with 24 hours' notice. ***If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel with less than 24-hours notice, I reserve the right to collect a \$100 cancellation fee*** (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control). If it is possible, we may be able to reschedule the appointment for another time.

**Adolescent Consent Form
&
Parent Agreement to Respect Privacy**

Adolescent therapy client:

Signing below indicates that you have reviewed the policies in the informed consent for minor and you understand the limits to confidentiality. If you have any questions as we progress with therapy, you can ask me at any time. You may receive a copy of the document at any time upon request.

Minor's Signature _____ Date _____

Minor's Printed Name _____

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Parent/Guardian:

Please initial each statement and sign below indicating your agreement to respect your adolescent's privacy:

___ I will refrain from requesting detailed information about individual therapy sessions with my child. I understand that I will be provided with periodic updates about general progress, and/or may be asked to participate in therapy sessions as needed.

___ Although I know I have the legal right to request written records/session notes since my child is a minor, I agree NOT to request these records in order to respect the confidentiality of my adolescent's treatment.

___ I understand that I will be informed about situations that could endanger my child. I know this decision to breach confidentiality in these circumstances is up to the therapist's professional judgment.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____