

Notice of Privacy Practices

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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.

Your Privacy at a Glance

Psychotherapy is private.

What you and I discuss is private, except in the limited circumstances described in this Notice.

Information follows defined pathways.

Some information is recorded or processed in systems that support your care. Being part of your psychotherapy record does not make that information available to other people. Different uses and disclosures have different purposes and rules.

You authorize many disclosures.

If you want me to share information with another clinician, a family member or support person, or someone else you identify, I ask you to authorize that communication in writing through the Client Portal.

Some information is used to provide and administer care.

Clinical records, the Client Portal, Telehealth, billing, payment processing, and insurance when you use it require information about your care.

There are limited exceptions.

Federal or state law sometimes permits or requires disclosure without your authorization. These are specific exceptions, not open-ended access to your psychotherapy record.

You have rights.

You have rights concerning your record, how I communicate with you, restrictions on some disclosures, and information about certain disclosures that have been made.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT IS NOT CONSENT.

Signing the separate acknowledgment form confirms that you received this Notice. It does not mean that you agree to specific uses or disclosures of your information or waive any privacy rights.

THE AIRLOCK SYSTEMS THAT GUIDE RELEASE OF YOUR INFORMATION



1. Privacy & This Notice

Confidentiality is an important foundation of psychotherapy. For our work to be useful, you need to be able to speak openly about personal matters with a reasonable expectation that what you share will remain private.

This Notice explains how information about you may be used or disclosed in providing psychotherapy, maintaining the systems that support your care, receiving payment, operating the practice, and meeting professional or legal responsibilities. It also explains your rights concerning that information.

Federal privacy law uses the term protected health information, or PHI, for health information protected by HIPAA. I will usually use the more ordinary terms health information or information about you.

The psychotherapy itself is not the same thing as the record made about it or the information needed to support your care. Information may be documented, processed, or disclosed for a defined purpose without making your psychotherapy conversation available.

A legal permission to disclose information does not automatically create a reason to disclose it. When circumstances allow, I involve you in understanding what information may need to be shared, why it may be needed, and how much information is relevant.

The Outpatient Services Agreement explains confidentiality as part of our therapeutic relationship. This Notice focuses on your privacy rights and how your health information may be used and disclosed.

2. How Information Is Used to Support Your Care

Federal law permits health information to be used or disclosed for treatment, payment, and health-care operations in many circumstances without a separate HIPAA authorization. More protective state laws may impose additional limits. My own practice may also be more protective than the broadest disclosure the law would permit.

Treatment

I use information you share with me to understand your circumstances, provide psychotherapy, make clinical decisions, and maintain an appropriate treatment record.

For planned communication with another treating professional, I ask you to complete a written authorization through the Client Portal first.

There are limited circumstances in which communication needed for your care may occur without a separate authorization when applicable law permits it—for example, if another treating professional contacts me during an unexpected hospitalization.

In either situation, I limit what I disclose to information relevant to the purpose of the disclosure.

Payment

Information may be used or disclosed as needed to bill for services and receive payment.

If you pay privately, this may include payment processing and related accounting. If you use health insurance, information is also used to submit and process claims.

Health-Care Operations

Health-care operations are activities needed to run and maintain the practice. They may include maintaining clinical and administrative systems, reviewing billing or other practice processes, meeting professional and legal requirements, and other activities necessary to operate the practice appropriately.

Only information relevant to the specific function should be used or disclosed.

SimplePractice & Other Services Supporting the Practice

I use SimplePractice for the Client Portal, Telehealth, clinical records, scheduling, secure messaging, billing, and insurance-related functions. This means that some protected health information is stored or processed through SimplePractice as part of providing and administering your care.

SimplePractice functions as a HIPAA business associate of my practice. Current information about its privacy and security practices is available through the SimplePractice Trust Center.

I may also use other outside services for functions such as payment processing, accounting, technical support, or other practice administration. The information used for a particular service depends on the function it performs, and I limit that information wherever reasonably possible. When a service creates, receives, maintains, or transmits protected health information on behalf of my practice and HIPAA requires business-associate protections, I use those protections.

Using an outside service does not make your psychotherapy information generally available to that service or to other people. Different services perform different functions and receive different information.

Insurance

If you use health insurance, a routine claim includes information such as your identifying information, date and type of service, diagnosis, and information needed to process payment. It does not contain the content of what you discuss in psychotherapy.

If your insurer asks for additional clinical information while you are currently in treatment, I discuss the request with you before I respond. I document that discussion and limit what I disclose to information relevant to the purpose of the disclosure.

HIPAA does not necessarily require a separate authorization for a payment-related disclosure. My practice of discussing a request for additional clinical information with you first is part of how I preserve transparency and your participation when more detailed information is requested.

Professional Consultation

I may consult with another licensed psychologist or other qualified professional about my clinical work. Consultation supports careful thinking about psychotherapy and is part of responsible professional practice.

I limit identifying information as much as reasonably possible and share only information relevant to the consultation. The professional with whom I consult is also responsible for maintaining confidentiality.

3. When You Authorize Disclosure

If you want me to share information with another clinician, a family member or support person, or someone else you identify, I ask you to authorize that communication in writing through the Client Portal, unless applicable law permits or requires the disclosure without one.

An authorization identifies what information may be shared, who may receive it, and what you hope the disclosure will make possible.

The purpose matters because it helps determine what information is useful to share. When a focused treatment summary, conversation, or selected information can meet that purpose, I use that rather than releasing an entire psychotherapy record.

What You Hope the Disclosure May Accomplish

The authorization gives you space to describe, in your own words, what you hope sharing information may accomplish.

For example, you may want me to help another clinician understand something relevant to your care, help a family member or support person understand something that would make their support more useful to you, or communicate with another person you identify for a particular reason.

If you have also authorized that person to share information with me, you may describe what you hope they can help me understand that would be useful in our work together.

The purpose does not expand the authorization. It helps define what information is relevant within the scope you have authorized.

Different Information May Require Different Authorization

In my practice, I use separate written authorization forms through the Client Portal for general protected health information, HIV-related information, and substance-use-disorder information.

Authorizing disclosure of general health information does not automatically authorize me to disclose HIV-related or substance-use-disorder information.

I use this approach consistently even when a particular law might permit a broader authorization.

You can view authorizations you have previously signed in the Documents section of the Client Portal.

You may revoke an authorization at any time by notifying me in writing. Revocation stops future disclosures under that authorization after I receive it, but it cannot undo information already disclosed in reliance on a valid authorization.

Family Members, Friends & Support People

I do not discuss your psychotherapy with family members, friends, or support people simply because they know you or are involved in your life.

If you want someone included in part of your care, we discuss what you hope their involvement may accomplish and complete an appropriate authorization.

Other Uses Requiring Authorization

I do not sell your protected health information or use it for marketing or fundraising.

Most uses or disclosures of separately maintained psychotherapy notes also require specific written authorization.

Other uses or disclosures not described in this Notice will be made only with your written authorization unless applicable law permits or requires otherwise.

AUTHORIZATION IS PURPOSE-SPECIFIC

Authorizing one communication does not mean opening your entire record.

- Who needs information?
- What are you hoping the communication may make possible?
- What information is relevant to that purpose?

4. Limited Exceptions: When Information May Be Shared Without Your Authorization

Most information used or disclosed outside the psychotherapy itself follows one of the pathways already described: it is used to provide or administer your care, or you authorize a disclosure for a particular purpose.

Less frequently, a protective or legal issue may arise that requires consideration of sharing specific information.

Protective Disclosure We Decide Together

Sometimes you and I may decide together that sharing limited information with another person, agency, or protective service would serve an important purpose—for example, helping protect someone who may be vulnerable to harm.

Whenever possible, I prefer to involve you in deciding whether information should be shared, what we each hope the disclosure may accomplish, and what information is needed for that purpose.

When written authorization is legally required for such a disclosure, I will ask you to complete it on the Portal before I disclose the information.

A disclosure we decide on together is different from a disclosure that the law requires or permits me to make without your authorization. In some circumstances, my legal responsibilities may require me to act even when you would prefer that I not disclose the information.

Limited Legal Exceptions

In limited circumstances, federal or state law permits or requires me to share information without your authorization.

These are specific exceptions, not broad access to your psychotherapy record. Each exception has its own legal requirements.

When circumstances allow, I let you know when something you are discussing may bring one of these limits into play. If information must or may appropriately be disclosed, I limit the disclosure according to the purpose and legal requirements that apply.

Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation

The law may require me to report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation in particular circumstances.

The reporting requirements are different in Maine, New York, and Pennsylvania. The state section below describes the differences most relevant to my practice.

Serious Risk of Harm

When there is a serious concern about possible physical harm to you or another person, the law may permit or require me to take protective action.

The standards and responsibilities are not identical in Maine, New York, and Pennsylvania. Those differences are described in the state section below.

Legal Demands

A subpoena, request from an attorney, or other legal demand does not by itself mean that someone is entitled to your psychotherapy record.

I first determine what applicable confidentiality, privilege, and privacy law requires or permits. If information must be disclosed, I limit the disclosure to what the applicable legal process requires.

Professional or Regulatory Review

In uncommon circumstances, a legally authorized professional or regulatory body may request information for a specific complaint, investigation, audit, or other oversight function.

This is not routine access to psychotherapy records. Any disclosure must have an applicable legal basis and is limited by the requirements governing that process.

Other Specialized Uses and Disclosures

Federal law also permits or requires certain specialized uses or disclosures of health information under defined conditions. These may include public-health activities, health oversight, judicial or administrative proceedings, particular law-enforcement requests, workers' compensation, approved research activities, coroners or medical examiners, organ or tissue donation, and certain specialized government functions.

These circumstances are uncommon in my psychotherapy practice. The fact that the law recognizes a category does not create general access to your psychotherapy information. Any disclosure must meet the requirements that apply to that specific situation.

5. Information That Receives Additional Protection

Some information receives additional privacy protection because of the kind of information it is or because of the law that applies to a particular record.

Psychotherapy Notes

Psychotherapy notes have a specific meaning under HIPAA. They are notes that a mental-health professional records to document or analyze the contents of psychotherapy conversations and keeps separate from the ordinary clinical record.

They are not the same as progress notes or other information maintained in your regular treatment record, such as diagnoses, treatment plans, symptoms, prognosis, progress, appointment information, or billing records.

Most uses or disclosures of separately maintained psychotherapy notes require your specific written authorization.

Psychotherapy notes are also generally excluded from the ordinary HIPAA right of access.

Substance Use & Your Privacy

You should be able to talk openly with me about alcohol or drug use, including the use of an illegal substance.

What you tell me about your substance use is protected health information. I do not report your use of an illegal substance to law enforcement simply because you discuss it with me. The separate limits of confidentiality described elsewhere in this Notice continue to apply if one of them independently becomes relevant.

If information about substance use is clinically relevant, I may document it in your psychotherapy record.

Talking with me about alcohol or drug use does not by itself turn your psychotherapy record into a record protected by the federal law known as 42 CFR Part 2.

In my practice, I do not automatically disclose substance-use-disorder information when you authorize disclosure of other health information. I use a separate written authorization for disclosure of substance-use-disorder information.

As with other clinical information, I limit what I disclose to information relevant to the purpose of the disclosure.

Records Protected by 42 CFR Part 2

Some records created by qualifying substance-use-disorder treatment programs receive additional federal protection under 42 CFR Part 2.

These protections are intended to help people seek substance-use treatment without unnecessarily exposing them to discrimination, legal jeopardy, or other harms because they sought care. Part 2 therefore places additional limits on how qualifying treatment records may be disclosed or used against the patient.

My psychotherapy practice is not a Part 2 treatment program. Talking with me about alcohol or drug use does not by itself turn your psychotherapy record into a Part 2 record.

However, I may sometimes receive or maintain a record that is already protected by Part 2—for example, a record sent to me by a qualifying substance-use-disorder treatment program.

When I receive or maintain a Part 2-protected record, I follow the additional protections that apply to that record.

Among those protections, Part 2 places special limits on using or disclosing protected records in civil, criminal, administrative, or legislative investigations or proceedings against you. Such use or disclosure generally requires your written consent or a Part 2 court order together with the required subpoena or similar legal mandate.

HIV-Related Information

HIV-related information receives additional privacy protection under applicable law.

In my practice, I use a separate written authorization before disclosing HIV-related information. A general authorization to disclose health information does not automatically authorize me to disclose HIV-related information.

I use this separate authorization process for clients in Maine, New York, and Pennsylvania even though the precise legal requirements differ among the states.

6. Your Privacy Rights

You have rights concerning your health information. If you want to exercise one of these rights and are unsure how to do so, you may ask me.

You may make a privacy-right request through the secure Client Portal or by contacting me in writing.

Access Your Record

You generally have the right to inspect or obtain a paper or electronic copy of your health record to the extent provided by law.

Separately maintained psychotherapy notes are treated differently and generally are not included in the ordinary HIPAA right of access.

If reviewing part of your record together would be useful, we may do that. You do not have to agree with what is written in your record in order to exercise your right of access.

Request an Amendment

If you believe information in your health or billing record is inaccurate or incomplete, you may request an amendment.

An amendment does not necessarily erase the original entry. The record may preserve the original information together with a later correction, clarification, or statement.

Request Confidential Communication

You may ask me to communicate with you in a particular way or at a particular location when the request is reasonable.

For example, you may ask that I use a particular telephone number or other appropriate method of communication.

Ask for a Restriction

You may ask me to restrict certain uses or disclosures of your health information. I am not required to agree to every requested restriction.

If you pay for a service entirely yourself and the applicable requirements are met, you may ask me not to disclose information about that service to your health plan for payment or health-care operations. I am generally required to honor that request unless disclosure is required by law.

Request an Accounting of Certain Disclosures

You may ask for an accounting of certain disclosures of your health information made during the six years before your request.

An accounting is not a list of every time information has been used or shared. HIPAA excludes some categories from the accounting requirement, including many disclosures for treatment, payment, and health-care operations and certain disclosures you specifically authorized or requested.

Have Someone Act for You

If another person has legal authority to act as your personal representative, that person may exercise applicable privacy rights on your behalf.

Before treating someone as your personal representative, I verify the authority that allows that person to act for you.

Receive a Copy of This Notice

You may obtain a paper copy of this Notice at any time, even if you usually receive practice documents electronically.

You may also ask questions about this Notice or any of these rights.

7. Additional State Protections & Requirements

The laws governing psychotherapy may differ depending on where you are located when you receive services.

Because I am licensed in Maine, New York, and Pennsylvania, the same topics appear under each state so that you can find the rules that apply where you are receiving psychotherapy.

Maine

Psychotherapy confidentiality & legal process. Maine provides additional protection for mental-health information and limits disclosure except as permitted or required by law.

Child abuse & neglect. As a psychologist, I am a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect when Maine's reporting requirements are met. This responsibility can arise even though my psychotherapy practice serves adults.

Adult abuse, neglect & exploitation. Maine requires psychologists to report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an incapacitated or dependent adult when the legal reporting standard is met. A limited exception may apply when I learn the information while treating the person suspected of causing the harm for a problem related to that harm and the vulnerable adult's life or health is not immediately threatened.

Safety. Maine requires me to warn or take reasonable protective precautions when communications with a client give me a reasonable basis to believe that the client is likely to engage in physical violence posing a serious risk of harm to self or others.

HIV-related information. HIV-related information may receive additional protection under Maine law. In my practice, I use a separate written authorization before disclosing HIV-related information.

Substance-use information. Substance-use information may receive additional protection under federal or state law depending on the type and source of the record. In my practice, I use a separate written authorization for disclosure of substance-use-disorder information.

New York

Psychotherapy confidentiality & legal process. New York gives confidential psychologist-client communications strong legal protection. Authorizing disclosure for insurance benefits does not by itself waive that protection.

Child abuse & maltreatment. As a psychologist, I am a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or maltreatment when New York's reporting requirements are met. This responsibility can arise even though my psychotherapy practice serves adults.

Adult abuse, neglect & exploitation. In private outpatient psychotherapy, New York does not generally require me to report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an adult solely because I learn about it in psychotherapy. Different reporting requirements may apply in particular programs, facilities, or other circumstances.

Safety. New York law recognizes more than one safety-related exception to confidentiality. If I determine that a client presents a serious and imminent danger to an identifiable person, the law may permit me to disclose relevant information to that person and to law enforcement in order to help protect them.

New York also requires a separate report when, using reasonable professional judgment, I determine that a client is likely to engage in conduct resulting in serious harm to self or others. Information reported through that process is limited to identifying information and is used to determine whether the person may legally possess a firearm or whether a firearm license should be suspended or revoked.

HIV-related information. New York provides additional statutory protection for HIV-related information. In my practice, I use a separate written authorization before disclosing HIV-related information.

Substance-use information. Substance-use information may receive additional protection under federal or state law depending on the type and source of the record. In my practice, I use a separate written authorization for disclosure of substance-use-disorder information.

Pennsylvania

Psychotherapy confidentiality & legal process. Pennsylvania requires psychologists to safeguard confidential information obtained through professional services and provides strong protection for psychologist-client communications.

Child abuse. As a psychologist, I am a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse when Pennsylvania's reporting requirements are met. This responsibility can arise even though my psychotherapy practice serves adults.

Adult abuse, neglect & exploitation. In private outpatient psychotherapy, Pennsylvania does not generally require me to report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an adult solely because I learn about it in psychotherapy. Particular laws, facilities, or service settings may create separate reporting responsibilities.

Safety. Pennsylvania permits disclosure after careful deliberation when there is a clear and imminent danger to the client or others. Pennsylvania law also recognizes protective action concerning serious threats toward an identified or readily identifiable person or group when the applicable legal requirements are met.

HIV-related information. Pennsylvania provides additional protection for HIV-related information. In my practice, I use a separate written authorization before disclosing HIV-related information.

Substance-use information. Some substance-use-treatment records receive additional protection under federal or Pennsylvania law. In my practice, I use a separate written authorization for disclosure of substance-use-disorder information.

8. My Responsibilities

I am required by law to maintain the privacy and security of your protected health information and to follow the privacy practices described in the Notice currently in effect.

I use and disclose information only as permitted or required by applicable law. When a more protective state or other privacy rule applies, I follow the more protective requirement.

If a breach occurs that may have compromised the privacy or security of your protected health information, I notify you when and as required by law.

I use outside services to support some functions of the practice. When an outside service creates, receives, maintains, or transmits protected health information on behalf of my practice and HIPAA requires business-associate protections, I use those protections.

I also try to limit the information used or disclosed to what is appropriate for the function or purpose involved.

9. Questions, Concerns & Complaints

I encourage you to ask me if you have questions about this Notice, your record, how information has been handled, or any of your privacy rights.

Many privacy questions or concerns can be clarified or resolved through direct conversation. You are welcome to ask what information is in your record, how information was used, why something was disclosed, or which privacy rule applies.

If you remain concerned about how your information has been handled, or believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may make a complaint directly to me:

Geoffrey Steinberg, Psy.D.

Privacy Contact: Geoffrey Steinberg, Psy.D.

Address: 123 South Broad Street, Suite 2540, Philadelphia, PA 19109

Phone: (215) 410-7024

Email: gs@drgeoffreysteinsteinberg.com

Secure communication: Client Portal → geoffrey-steinberg.clientsecure.me

You may also file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), including through OCR's online complaint process or by mail. OCR handles complaints concerning HIPAA and, when applicable, 42 CFR Part 2.

I will not retaliate against you for asking a privacy question, exercising a privacy right, raising a concern, or making a complaint.

10. Changes to This Notice

Privacy law, technology, and the operation of my practice may change over time.

I may revise this Notice when the law or my privacy practices change. When a change materially affects the privacy practices described here, I revise the Notice accordingly.

A revised Notice may apply to information I already maintain as well as information created or received later, to the extent permitted by law.

The current Notice will always identify its effective date.

The current Notice will be available on my practice website, through the Client Portal when appropriate, posted or available in my office, and in paper form upon request.

When I make a significant revision, I may also provide the updated Notice directly to current clients so that changes affecting their privacy are easier to understand and find.

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