

Veronica (Roni) Ahern, M.A.
Licensed Psychologist

HIPAA PRIVACY NOTICE

This Notice of health information practices describes how health information about you may be used and disclosed, and how you can get access to this information. It also describes your rights as they relate to your protected health information (PHI). This notice is effective April 14, 2003 and applies to all protected health information as defined by federal regulations. Please review this information carefully.

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 consent. To help clarify these terms, here are some definitions:

- PHI refers to information in your health record that could identify you.
- 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 health care. Examples of payment are when I disclose your PHI to your health insurer to obtain reimbursement for your health care or to determine eligibility for 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, business-related matters, such as audits and administrative services, and case management and care coordination.
- Use applies only to activities within my office.
- Disclosure applies to activities outside my office, such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

II. 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. An “authorization” is written permission about and beyond the general consent that permits only specific disclosures. 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 an individual, group, or family counseling session, which I 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) I 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

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

- **Child Abuse:** If I know or have reason to believe a child is being neglected or physically or sexually abused, or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years, I must immediately report the information to the local county child protection office, police and/or sheriff’s department.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If I have reason to believe that a vulnerable adult is being or has been maltreated, or if I have knowledge that a vulnerable adult has sustained a physical injury which is not reasonably explained, I must immediately report the information to the appropriate agency in the county. I may also report the information to a law enforcement agency. “Vulnerable adult” means a person who, regardless of residence or whether any type of service is received, possesses a physical to mental infirmity or other physical, mental, or emotional dysfunction.
- **Health Oversight Activities:** The Minnesota Board of Psychology may subpoena records from me if they are relevant to an investigation it is conducting.
- **Judicial and Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about the professional services I have provided you and/or the record thereof, such

information is privileged under state law and I must not release this information without written authorization from you or your legally appointed representative, or a court order. This privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court-ordered. I will inform you in advance if this is the case.

- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** If you communicate a specific, serious threat of physical violence against a specific, clearly identified or identifiable potential victim, I must make reasonable efforts to communicate this threat to the potential victim or to a law enforcement agency. I must also do so if a member of your family or someone who knows you well has reason to believe you are capable of and will carry out the threat. I also may disclose information about you necessary to protect you from a threat to commit suicide.
- **Worker's Compensation:** If you file a worker's compensation claim, a release of information from me to your employer, insurer, the Department of Labor and Industry, or you will not need your prior approval for me to disclose information.

IV. Client's Rights and Psychologist's Duties

Client's 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 Communication by Alternatives Mean 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 your PHI (and psychotherapy notes) used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. You may be charged a fee for copies. I may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases, you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, I 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. If your request is denied, you can write a statement of disagreement with the denial that will be kept with your medical information.
- **Right to an Accounting** – You generally have the right to receive an accounting of disclosure of PHI for which you have neither provided consent nor authorization (as described in Section III of this Notice). On your request, I will discuss with 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 the 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 practices, I will send a new notice to you prior to making a change.

V. Complaints

If you are concerned that I have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision I make about access to your records, you may contact your health insurance plan, the Minnesota Department of Health or the Board of Psychology.

You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services, Medical Privacy Complaint Division, 200 Independence Avenue SW, Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201.

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

I reserve the right to change the terms of this Notice and to make the new Notice provisions effective for all PHI that I maintain. I will provide you with a revised Notice by sending a new Notice to you prior to any change.