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Notice of Privacy Practices – Final Rule September 23, 2013

The Notice of Privacy Practices describes how psychological information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please indicate that you have received our privacy notice by signing and dating the included form.

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

We 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, Payment and Health Care Operations*”
 - *Treatment* is when we provide, coordinate or manage your health care and other services related to your health care. An example of treatment would be when we consult with another health care provider, such as your family physician or another psychologist.
 - *Payment* is when we obtain reimbursement for your health care. Examples of payment are when we 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 our 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 our [office, clinic, practice group, etc.] such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “*Disclosure*” applies to activities outside of our [office, clinic, practice group, etc.], such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

II. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

We may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and health care operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. An “*authorization*” is written permission above and beyond the general consent that permits only specific disclosures. In those instances when we are asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment and health care operations, we will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. We will also need to obtain a separate and specific authorization before releasing your psychotherapy notes. “*Psychotherapy notes*” are notes we have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which we have kept separate from the rest of your psychological record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI. In addition, we will obtain an authorization from you before releasing your PHI for any uses and disclosures not described in this Privacy Notice.

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) we 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

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

- **Child Abuse:** If, in our professional capacity, we know or suspect that a child under 18 years of age or a mentally retarded, developmentally disabled, or physically impaired child under 21 years of age has suffered or faces a threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect, we are required by law to immediately report that knowledge or suspicion to the Ohio Public Children Services Agency, or a municipal or county peace officer.
- **Elder and Domestic Abuse:** If we have reasonable cause to believe that an elder is being abused, neglected, or exploited, or is in a condition which is the result of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, we are required by law to immediately report such belief to the County Department of Job and Family Services.
- **Judicial or Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your evaluation, diagnosis and treatment and the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law and we will not release this information without written authorization from you or your persona or legally-appointed representative, or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** If we believe that you pose a clear and substantial risk of imminent serious harm to yourself or another person, we may disclose your relevant confidential information to public authorities, the potential victim, other professionals, and/or your family in order to protect against such harm. If you communicate to us an explicit threat of inflicting

imminent and serious physical harm or causing the death of one or more clearly identifiable victims, and we believe you have the intent and ability to carry out the threat, then we are required by law to take one or more of the following actions in a timely manner: 1) take steps to hospitalize you on an emergency basis, 2) establish and undertake a treatment plan calculated to eliminate the possibility that you will carry out the threat, and initiate arrangements for a second opinion risk assessment with another mental health professional, 3) communicate to a law enforcement agency and, if feasible, to the potential victim(s), or victim's parent or guardian if a minor, all of the following information: a) the nature of the threat, b) your identity, and c) the identity of the potential victim(s).

- **Worker's Compensation:** If you file a worker's compensation claim, we may be required to give your mental health information to relevant parties and officials.
- **Other:** When the use and disclosure without your consent or authorization is allowed under other sections of Section 164.512 of the Privacy Rule and the State's confidentiality law. This includes certain narrowly defined disclosures to law enforcement agencies, to a health oversight agency (such as HHS or a state department of health), to a coroner or medical examiner, for public health purposes relating to disease or FDA-regulated products, or for specialized government functions such as fitness for military duties, eligibility for VA benefits, and national security and intelligence.

IV. Patient's Rights and Psychologist's Duties

Patient's Rights:

- **Right to Request Restrictions** – You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of PHI about you. However, we are not required to agree to a restriction at your request.
- **Right to Restrict Disclosures When You Have Paid for Your Care Out-of-Pocket** – You have the right to restrict certain disclosures of PHI to a health plan if you pay out-of-pocket in full for the health care service.
- **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. Upon your request, we 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 and psychotherapy notes in the mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the request 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. We may deny your request. On your request, we 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 for which you have neither provided consent nor authorization (as described in Section III of this Notice). On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.
- **Right to be Notified if There is a Breach of Your Unsecured PHI** – You have the right to be notified if: (a) there is a breach (a use or disclosure of your PHI in violation of the HIPAA Privacy Rule) of your unsecured PHI; (b) that PHI has not been encrypted to government standards; and (c) our risk assessment fails to determine that there is a low probability that your PHI has been compromised.
- **Right to a Paper Copy** – You have the right to obtain a paper copy of the notice from us upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.

Psychologist's Duties:

- We are required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- We reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless we notify you of such changes, however, we are required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- If we revise our policies and procedures, we will post the revisions in our offices and on our website at www.westernreservepsych.com.

V. Complaints

If you are concerned that we have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we made about access to your records, you may contact your psychologist. If your complaint remains unresolved, you may contact our Privacy Officer, Richard C. Rynearson, Ph.D., Psychologist, at 330-650-5338.

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

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions and Changes to Privacy Policy

- This notice will go into effect on (September 23, 2013).
- We will limit the uses or disclosures in response to your requests or special circumstances if they are not in conflict with federal or state law. Such limits will be included in your psychological record and must be signed by you.

- We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that we maintain. We will provide you with a revised notice by posting it in our offices and on our website at www.westernreservepsych.com.

HIPAA: Notice of Privacy Practices Rev. 09-16-13