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**Notice of Privacy Practices (NPP)**

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.

This practice is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your personal health information (PHP). We are required also by law to do this. These laws are complicated, but we must provide you with important information. We will use the information about your health, which we get from you or from others, mainly to provide you with treatment. This includes communication to arrange payment for our services or for some other business activities which are called, in the law, health care operations. After you have read this NPP, we will ask you to sign our Consent and Authorization Form which includes Consent to let us use and share your information for the reasons identified above. If you do not consent and sign this form, we cannot treat you. If we or you want to use or disclose (send, share, release) your information for any other purposes than identified above, we will discuss this with you and ask you to sign an Authorization to allow this.

While your PHP is protected, there are some times when the laws require us to use or share it such as: 1. When there is a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of another individual or the public. We will only share information with a person or organization that is able to help prevent or reduce the threat. 2. Some lawsuits and legal or court proceedings. Note: We must have a subpoena and court order to release your records without your consent. In all cases, we will contact you first to notify you of any requests for your records. 3. If a law enforcement official requires us to do so in cases of an emergency or community security. 4. We are required by law to report suspected child or elder abuse to legal authorities. \*\*See below: Duty to warn and Mandated reporting laws

Your rights regarding your health information:

1. You can ask us to communicate with you about your health and related issues in a particular way or at a certain place. For example, you can ask us to call you at home and not at work to schedule or cancel an appointment. We will try our best to do as you ask. 2. You have the right to ask us to limit what we tell certain individuals involved in your care or the payment for your care. We will not disclose information to family members and friends without your written authorization to do so, unless it is against the law or in an emergency. 3. You have the right to look at the health information we have about you such as your medical and billing records. Should you request a copy, there will be administrative and copy fees. 4. If you believe the information in your records is incorrect or incomplete, you can ask us to make some kinds of changes (called amending) to your health information. You must tell us in writing the reasons you want to make the changes. 5. You have the right to a copy of this notice. If we change this NPP we will post it in our waiting room and you can always get a new copy of the NPP from Sheri Bland or the website. 6. When we disclose information in your records, we keep records to whom we sent it, when we sent it and what was sent. You can get an accounting (a list) of many of these disclosures, however, you would have be informed and would have to authorize any release of your records that do not relate to your treatment, payment or operations as described in the second paragraph of this notice. 7. You have the right to file a complaint if you believe your privacy rights have been violated. You can file a complaint with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. All complaints must be in writing. Filing a complaint will not change the health care we provide to you. If you have any questions regarding this notice or our health information privacy policies, please contact Sheri Bland, MSW, LCSW.

**\*\*Mandated Reporting** The Abused and Neglected Children’s Reporting Act in Illinois requires that “mandated reporters” must disclose any suspected instances of abuse or neglect of minors to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Your psychotherapist is a mandated reporter, as are all mental health service providers. The only requirement is that the “provider” has a good faith belief or conclusion that a neglect or abuse situation exists. If this is so in the mind of the mandated reporter the law absolutely requires that a phone call be made to DCFS, such that DCFS may investigate the situation. If such a report is made, it is the policy of this office to first advise the client that the report will be made. Subsequent to a “mandated” report, the client, and possibly others, will be contacted by a follow up investigator from DCFS. If these investigators confirm the presence of abuse or neglect, a letter so indicating will be issued, and possible court hearings could result. If the DCFS investigators conclude that no abuse or neglect has occurred, a letter will be issued indicating that the claim is “unfounded.” The mandated reporter has no choice but to make reports in these situations. The client should be aware that the statute provides for loss of license if a mandated reporter fails to make a mandated report. The statute also provides the mandated reporter with absolute immunity from any criminal or civil liability in the event that such a report is made, even without the consent of the client.

**\*\* Duty to Warn** Under the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act, the psychotherapist may “warn” any intended victim, as well as the responsible authorities, and disclose confidential information, where a client discloses in session that he or she intends to cause serious mental or physical harm to a specifically identifiable victim and presents a clear and imminent risk of harm. It is then the psychotherapist’s responsibility to take steps to notify the victim and/or local authorities and provide enough information with which the authorities and/or the victim might prevent the harm from occurring and/or in order to prevent a serious threat to public safety. Therefore, if a client discloses an intent to harm a specific person, the psychotherapist must either contact that person and the authorities, or attempt to secure the hospitalization of the individual. These disclosures are also protected by an immunity clause in the statute.