

Rock City Counseling LLC

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Notice of Professional Counselor's Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Patient's Health Information

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT 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 healthcare operations purposes with your written authorization. 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 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 healthcare provider, such as your family physician or another psychologist.
 - *Payment* is when I obtain reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are when I 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 my 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 my practice, such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “Disclosure” applies to activities outside of my practice, such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.
- “Authorization” is your written permission to disclose confidential mental health information. All authorizations to disclose must be on a specific legally required form.

II. Other Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

I may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, or healthcare operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. In those instances when I am asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment, or healthcare operations, I will obtain authorization from you before releasing this information. I will also need to obtain authorization before releasing your Psychotherapy Notes. “Psychotherapy Notes” are notes I have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session. I have kept it 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, the law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

I will also obtain authorization from you before using or disclosing PHI in a way that is not described in this notice, for using or disclosing PHI for marketing purposes, or for using or disclosing PHI in a way that is considered a sale of PHI.

III. Uses and Disclosures without Authorization

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

- *Child Abuse* – If I have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, I must report this belief to the appropriate authorities.
- *Adult and Domestic Abuse* – I may disclose protected health information regarding you if I reasonably believe you are a victim of abuse, neglect, self-neglect or exploitation.
- *Health Oversight Activities* – If I receive a subpoena from the Maryland Board of Examiners of Psychologists because they are investigating my practice, I must disclose any PHI requested by the Board.
- *Judicial and Administrative Proceedings* – If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your diagnosis and treatment or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I will not release information without your written authorization or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated or 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 you communicate to me a specific threat of imminent harm against another individual or if I believe that there is a clear, imminent risk of physical or mental injury being inflicted against another individual, I may make disclosures that I believe are necessary to protect that individual from harm. If I believe that you present an imminent, serious risk of physical or mental injury or death to yourself, I may make disclosures I consider necessary to protect you from harm.
- *When the use and disclosure without your consent or authorization is allowed under other sections of Section 164.512 of the Privacy Rule and Maryland's confidentiality law.* This includes certain narrowly-defined disclosures to law enforcement

agencies, to a health oversight agency (such as HHS or the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene), 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 protected health information. However, I am not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- *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. 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 PHI in my mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases you may have this decision reviewed. You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of Psychotherapy Notes unless I believe the disclosure of the record will be injurious to your health. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process for both PHI and Psychotherapy Notes.
- *Right to Amend* – You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your request. On your request, I 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. On your request, I will discuss with you 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.
- *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 when you pay out-of-pocket in full for my services.
- *Right to Be Notified if There is a Breach of Your Unsecured PHI*. You have a right to be notified if' (a) there is a breach (a use or disclosure of your PHI in a violation of the HIPAA Privacy Rule) involving your PHI; (b) that PHI has not been encrypted to government standards; and (c) my risk assessment fails to determine there is a low probability that your PHI has been compromised.
- *Right to Opt out of Fundraising Communications*. You have a right to decide that you would not like to be included in fundraising communications that I may send out.

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 procedures, I will provide you with the revised notice either in person or by mail and allow you the opportunity to review and sign an acknowledgment that you have received the revision.

V. Questions and Complaints

If you have questions about this notice, disagree with a decision I make about access to your records or have other concerns about your privacy rights, you may contact **David L. Tong L.G.P.C.**, in my office at **1146 Opal Court, Hagerstown, MD 21740**. He can be reached at **301-842-7431**. If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated and wish to file a complaint with our office, you may send your written complaint to David L. Tong at the address above. 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.

You have specific rights under the Privacy Rule. I will not retaliate against you for exercising your right to file a complaint.

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

This notice should be considered effective and updated in compliance with HIPAA as of May 15, 2017.

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 posting it in the waiting room and will provide you with a copy if you request one.

Rock City Counseling LLC

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF
NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES**

* You May Refuse to Sign This Acknowledgement *

I, _____ have received a copy of Rock City
Counseling LLC's Notice of Privacy Practices.

Please Print Name

Signature

Date

For Office Use Only

We attempted to obtain written acknowledgment of receipt of our Notice of Privacy Practices, but acknowledgment could not be obtained because:

- Individual refused to sign
- Communication barriers prohibited obtaining the acknowledgment
- An emergency situation prevented us from obtaining acknowledgment
- Other (Please Specify)

