

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES POLICY
PRIVACY AND SECURITY OFFICER DESIGNATION

Confidentiality and privacy are the cornerstones of the mental health professions. Clients have an expectation that their communications with therapists, and their treatment records, will generally be kept confidential and will not be released to others without the written authorization of the client. One of the purposes of the Notice of Privacy Practices (NOPP) is to inform and educate clients about the fact that there are exceptions to the general rule of confidentiality. Many of these exceptions have existed for years, and many of them are the result of laws and regulations being passed by state legislatures and by the federal government. These laws and regulations are essentially statements of public policy. Our office policies and procedures (including this NOPP Policy), as well as the ethical standards of our profession, are intended to shape our practices so that privacy and confidentiality are maintained, consistent with Texas law and the federal "Privacy Rule."

1. Privacy and Security Officer: Your therapist (either Kirsten Brunner, Jason Sipkowski or Cheryl Tyler) is the Privacy and Security Officer for this practice. The Privacy and Security Officer is responsible for developing and implementing these policies and procedures.

2. Contact Person: Your therapist is the contact person for this practice. If you need or desire further information related to the NOPP, or if you have a complaint regarding these policies and procedures or our compliance with them, please contact your therapist.

3. The Privacy and Security Officer will maintain documentation of all consents, authorizations, Notices of Privacy Practices, office policies and procedures, and your requests for records or for amendments to records. The Privacy and Security Officer will also document complaints received and their disposition.

4. Conversations regarding confidential material or information will take place in an area and in a manner where they will not be easily overheard. Office doors must be closed, and sound masking must be used.

5. All written records will be kept in locked file cabinets. Individual offices are locked when therapists are not present and when written records are contained within. Your records will not be left in places where others are able to see the contents.

6. Computers, printers, and fax machines will be placed appropriately so that access is limited to office personnel and so that confidential information transmitted or received is not seen by others. Materials will not be left on printers or fax machines.

7. Information and records concerning you may be disclosed as described in the NOPP and in accordance with applicable law or regulation. Generally, we will obtain a written authorization from you before releasing information to third parties for purposes other than treatment payment, unless disclosure is required by law or permitted by law.

8. If mental health records are subpoenaed by an adverse party, we will assert the psychotherapist-client privilege on your behalf and will thereafter act according to you and your attorney's wishes, unless we are ordered by a Court or other lawful authority to release records or portions thereof.

9. To the extent that we keep client records electronically (e.g. on a computer), the computer will be password protected, the computer storage drive will be encrypted, and we will backup the computer files on a daily basis to an encrypted storage drive and will store the backup in two locations. By doing so, we will be prepared in the case of an incident of some kind that causes destruction, deletion, or damage to electronically stored client records.