

# 00 HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices

Down to Earth Counseling PLLC HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices: 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.

## Your Rights Summarized

When it comes to your health information, you have certain rights. This section explains your rights and some of our responsibilities to help you. You have the right to:

- Get a copy of your paper or electronic medical record
- Correct your paper or electronic medical record
- Request confidential communication
- Ask us to limit the information we share
- Get a list of those with whom we've shared your information
- Get a copy of this privacy notice
- Choose someone to act for you
- File a complaint if you believe your privacy rights have been violated

## Your Rights (Expanded)

You can:

### 1. Get an electronic or paper copy of your medical record

- You can ask to see or get an electronic or paper copy of your medical record and other health information we have about you. Ask us how to do this.
- We will provide a copy or a summary of your health information, usually within 30 days of your request. We may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee.

### 2. Ask us to correct your medical record

- You can ask us to correct health information about you that you think is incorrect or incomplete. Ask us how to do this.
- We may say "no" to your request, but we'll tell you why in writing within 60 days.

### 3. Request confidential communications

- You can ask us to contact you in a specific way (for example, home or office phone) or to send mail to a different address.

- We will say “yes” to all reasonable requests.

#### 4. Ask us to limit what we use or share

- You can ask us not to use or share certain health information for treatment, payment, or our operations. We are not required to agree to your request, and we may say “no” if it would affect your care.
- If you pay for a service or health care item out-of-pocket in full, you can ask us not to share that information for the purpose of payment or our operations with your health insurer. We will say “yes” unless a law requires us to share that information.

#### 5. Get a list of those with whom we’ve shared information

- You can ask for a list (accounting) of the times we’ve shared your health information for six years prior to the date you ask, who we shared it with, and why.
- We will include all the disclosures except for those about treatment, payment, and health care operations, and certain other disclosures (such as any you asked us to make). We’ll provide one accounting a year for free but will charge a reasonable, cost-based fee if you ask for another one within 12 months.

#### 6. Get a copy of this privacy notice

- You can ask for a paper copy of this notice at any time, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically. We will provide you with a paper copy promptly.

#### 7. Choose someone to act for you

- If you have given someone medical power of attorney or if someone is your legal guardian, that person can exercise your rights and make choices about your health information.
- We will make sure the person has this authority and can act for you before we take any action.

#### 8. File a complaint if you feel your rights are violated

- You can complain if you feel we have violated your rights by contacting us using the information listed below.
- You can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights by sending a letter to 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201, calling 1-877-696-6775, or visiting [www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/).
- We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

### **Your Choices**

For certain health information, you can tell us your choices about what we share. If you have a clear preference for how we share your information in the situations described below, talk to us. Tell us what you want us to do, and we will follow your instructions. In these cases, you have both the right and

choice to tell us to:

- Share information with your family, close friends, or others involved in your care
- Share information in a disaster relief situation

If you are not able to tell us your preference, for example if you are unconscious, we may go ahead and share your information if we believe it is in your best interest. We may also share your information when needed to lessen a serious and imminent threat to health or safety.

We will never sell or use your information for marketing purposes. Regarding most clinical notes, we never share your information unless you give us written permission.

### **Distinction Between Clinical Notes and Psychotherapy Notes**

Professional records constitute an important part of the therapy process and help with the continuity of care over time. According to the rules of HIPAA, your consultations are documented in two ways:

1. Clinical notes (required) may include the date of your consultations, your reasons for seeking therapy, diagnosis, therapeutic goals, treatment plan, progress, medical and social history, treatment history, functional status, any past records from other providers, as well as any reports to your insurance carrier
2. Psychotherapy notes (optional), consisting of the specific content or analyses of therapy conversations, how they impact the therapy (including sensitive information that you may reveal that is not required to be included in your clinical record), and notes of your therapist that may assist in treatment. Psychotherapy notes are kept separately from your clinical record in order to maximize privacy and security.

### **Our Uses and Disclosures Summarized**

We may use and share your information as we:

- Treat you
- Run our organization
- Bill for your services
- Help with public health and safety issues
- Do research
- Comply with the law
- Respond to organ and tissue donation requests
- Work with a medical examiner or funeral director

- Address workers' compensation, law enforcement, and other government requests
- Respond to lawsuits and legal actions

### **Our Uses and Disclosures (Expanded)**

We typically use or share your health information to:

- Treat you—we can use your health information and share it with other professionals who are treating you.
- Run our organization—we can use and share your health information to run our practice, improve your care, and contact you when necessary. We may contract with a billing agency, electronic health record service, and/or attorneys to attend to business aspects on an as-needed basis. In this case, there will be a written contract in place with the agency requiring that it maintain the security of your information, in compliance with the rules of HIPAA.
- Bill for your services—we can use and share your health information to bill and get payment from health plans or other entities.

### **How else can we use or share your health information?**

We are allowed or required to share your information in other ways – usually in ways that contribute to the public good, such as public health and research. We have to meet many conditions in the law before we can share your information for these purposes. For more information see:

[www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/consumers/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/consumers/index.html).

We can share health information about you for certain situations such as:

- Help with public health and safety issues
- Preventing disease
- Helping with product recalls
- Reporting adverse reactions to medications
- Reporting suspected abuse, neglect, or domestic violence
- Preventing or reducing a serious threat to anyone's health or safety
- For health research
- Comply with the law—we will share information about you if state or federal laws require it, including with the Department of Health and Human Services if it wants to see that we're complying with federal privacy law.
- Respond to organ and tissue donation requests—we can share health information about you with organ procurement organizations

- Work with a medical examiner or funeral director—we can share health information with a coroner, medical examiner, or funeral director when an individual dies.
- Address workers' compensation, law enforcement, and other government requests—we can use or share health information about you:
  - For workers' compensation claims
  - For law enforcement purposes or with a law enforcement official
  - With health oversight agencies for activities authorized by law
  - For special government functions such as military, national security, and presidential protective services
- Respond to lawsuits and legal actions—we can share health information about you in response to a court or administrative order, or in response to a subpoena.

### **Our Responsibilities**

- We are required by law to maintain the privacy and security of your protected health information.
- We will let you know promptly if a breach occurs that may have compromised the privacy or security of your information.
- We must follow the duties and privacy practices described in this notice and give you a copy of it.
- We will not use or share your information other than as described here unless you tell us we can in writing. If you tell us we can, you may change your mind at any time. Let us know in writing if you change your mind.
- We will keep your protected health information for a minimum of 6 years from your last date of service prior to destroying your records. You will also be notified prior to your records being destroyed.

For more information see: [www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/consumers/noticepp.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/consumers/noticepp.html).

### **Changes to the Terms of this Notice**

We can change the terms of this notice, and the changes will apply to all information we have about you. The new notice will be available upon request and through our Client Portal.

### **Organization Contact Information**

Down to Earth Counseling PLLC

919-443-5018

[adam@dtecounseling.com](mailto:adam@dtecounseling.com)

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Ste 1B-154

Durham, NC 27704

**By signing this document, I agree to all of the statements listed above, I acknowledge that all of my questions or/and concerns about this notice have been addressed by Down to Earth Counseling PLLC, and I agree to receive a copy of this notice electronically.**