

What You Should Know about Confidentiality in Therapy

I will treat what you tell me with great care. My professional ethics and the laws of this state prevent me from telling anyone else what you tell me unless you give me written permission. These rules and laws are the ways our society recognizes and supports the privacy of what we talk about—in other words, the “confidentiality” of therapy. However, I cannot promise that everything you tell me will never be revealed to someone else. There are some times when the law requires me to tell things to others. There are also some other limits on our confidentiality. We need to discuss these, because I want you to understand clearly what I can and cannot keep confidential. You need to know about these rules now, so that you don’t tell me something as a “secret” that I cannot keep secret. Please read these pages carefully and keep this copy. At our next meeting, we can discuss any questions you might have.

1. **When you or other persons are in physical danger**, the law requires me to tell others about it. Specifically:
 - a. If I come to believe that you are threatening serious harm to another person, I am required to try to protect that person. I may have to tell the person and the police, or perhaps try to have you put in a hospital.
 - b. If you seriously threaten or act in a way that is very likely to harm yourself, I may have to seek a hospital for you, or to call on your family members or others who can help protect you. If such a situation does come up, I will fully discuss the situation with you before I do anything, unless there is a very strong reason not to.
 - c. In an emergency where your life or health is in danger and I cannot get your consent, I may give another professional some information to protect your life. I will try to get your permission first, and I will discuss this with you as soon as possible afterwards.
 - d. If I believe or suspect that you are abusing a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person I must file a report with a state agency. To “abuse” means to neglect, hurt, or sexually molest another person. I do not have any legal power to investigate the situation to find out all the facts. The state agency will investigate. If this might be your situation, we should discuss the legal aspects in detail before you tell me anything about these topics. You may also want to talk to your lawyer.
2. In any of these situations, I would reveal only the information that is needed to protect you or the other person. I would not tell everything you have told me.
3. In general, **if you become involved in a court case or proceeding**, you can prevent me from testifying in court about what you have told me. This is called “privilege,” and it is your choice to prevent me from testifying or to allow me to do so. However, there are some situations where a judge or court may require me to testify:
 - a. In child custody or adoption proceedings, where your fitness as a parent is questioned or in doubt.
 - b. In cases where your emotional or mental condition is important information for a court’s decision.
 - c. During a malpractice case or an investigation of me or another therapist by a professional group.
 - d. In a civil commitment hearing to decide if you will be admitted to or continued in a psychiatric hospital.
 - e. When you are seeing me for court-ordered evaluations or treatment. In this case we need to discuss confidentiality fully, because you don’t have to tell me what you don’t want the court to find out through my report.
4. There are a few other things you must know about confidentiality and your treatment:
 - a. I may sometimes consult (talk) with another professional about your treatment. This other person is also required by professional ethics to keep your information confidential.

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- b. I am required to keep records of your treatment, such as the notes I take when we meet. You have a right to review these records with me. If something in the record might seriously upset you, I may leave it out, but I will fully explain my reasons to you.

The signatures here show that we each have read, discussed, understand, and agree to abide by the points presented above.

Signature of client (or person acting for client) Date

Printed name

Signature of therapist Date