



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 THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY.

Your health record contains personal information about you and your health. This information about you that may identify you and that relates to your past, present, or future physical health, mental health, or condition and related health care services is referred to as Protected Health Information (“PHI”). This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how I may use and disclose your PHI in accordance with applicable law, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (“HIPAA”), regulations promulgated under HIPAA including the HIPAA Privacy and Security Rules, and the NASW Code of Ethics. It also describes your rights regarding how you may gain access to and control your PHI.

I am required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with notice of my legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI. I am required to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices. I reserve the right to change the terms of my Notice of Privacy Practices at any time. Any new Notice of Privacy Practices will be effective for all PHI that I maintain at that time. I will provide you with a copy of the revised Notice of Privacy Practices by sending a copy to you in the mail upon request or by providing one to you at our next appointment.

HOW I MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION

For Treatment: Your PHI may be used and disclosed by those who are involved in your care for the purpose of providing, coordinating, or managing your health care treatment and related services. This includes consultation with other therapists for the purpose of peer consultation/supervision as well as appointment reminders. I may disclose PHI to any other consultant only with your authorization.

For Payment: I may use and disclose PHI so that I can receive payment for treatment services provided to you. This will only be done with your authorization. Examples of payment-related activities are: making a determination of eligibility or coverage for insurance benefits, processing claims with your insurance company, reviewing services provided to you to determine medical necessity, or undertaking utilization review activities. If it becomes necessary to use collection processes due to lack of payment for services, I will only disclose the minimum amount of PHI necessary for purposes of collection and payment.

For Health Care Operations: I may use or disclose, as needed, your PHI in order to support my business activities including, but not limited to, quality assessment activities, employee review activities, licensing, health and safety inspections, and conducting or arranging other business activities. For training or teaching purposes, PHI will only be disclosed with your authorization. For example, I may share your PHI with third parties that perform various business activities (e.g., billing services) provided I have a written contract with the business that requires it to safeguard the privacy of your PHI. For training or teaching purposes PHI will be disclosed only with your authorization.

Required by Law: Under the law, I must disclose your PHI to you upon your request. In addition, I must make disclosures to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services for purposes of investigating or determining my compliance with the requirements of the Privacy Rule.

Without Authorization: Applicable law and ethical standards permit me to disclose information about you without authorization only in a limited number of situations. Following is a list of the categories of uses and disclosures permitted by HIPAA without an authorization. As a social worker licensed in Michigan and as a member of the National Association of Social Workers, it is my practice to adhere to more stringent privacy requirements for disclosures without an authorization.

- **Child Abuse or Neglect:** I may disclose your PHI to a state or local agency that is authorized by law to receive reports of child abuse or neglect.
- **Judicial and Administrative Proceedings:** I may disclose your PHI pursuant to a subpoena (with your written consent), court order, administrative order or similar process.
- **Deceased Patients:** I may disclose PHI regarding deceased patients as mandated by state law, or to a family member or friend that was involved in your care or payment for care prior to death, based on your prior consent. A release of information regarding deceased patients may be limited to an executor or administrator of a deceased person's estate or the person identified as next-of-kin. PHI of persons that have been deceased for more than fifty (50) years is not protected under HIPAA.
- **Medical Emergencies:** I may use or disclose your PHI in a medical emergency situation to medical personnel only in order to prevent serious harm. I will try to provide you a copy of this notice as soon as reasonably practicable after the resolution of the emergency.
- **Family Involvement in Care:** I may disclose information to close family members or friends directly involved in your treatment based on your consent or as necessary to prevent serious harm.
- **Health Oversight:** If required, I may disclose PHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as audits, investigations, and inspections. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies and organizations that provide financial assistance to the program (such as third-party payors based on your prior consent) and peer review organizations performing utilization and quality control.
- **Law Enforcement:** I may disclose PHI to a law enforcement official as required by law, in compliance with a subpoena (with your written consent), court order, administrative order or similar document, for the purpose of identifying a suspect, material witness or missing person, in connection with the victim of a crime, in connection with a deceased person, in connection with the reporting of a crime in an emergency, or in connection with a crime on the premises.
- **Specialized Government Functions:** I may review requests from U.S. military command authorities if you have served as a member of the armed forces, authorized officials for national security and intelligence reasons and to the Department of State for medical suitability determinations, and disclose your PHI based on your written consent, mandatory disclosure laws and the need to prevent serious harm.
- **Public Health:** If required, I may use or disclose your PHI for mandatory public health activities to a public health authority authorized by law to collect or receive such information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability, or if directed by a public health authority, to a government agency that is collaborating with that public health authority.
- **Public Safety:** I may disclose your PHI if necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public. If information is disclosed to prevent or lessen a serious threat it will be disclosed to a person or persons reasonably able to prevent or lessen the threat, including the target of the threat.
- **Research:** PHI may only be disclosed after a special approval process or with your authorization.
- **Fundraising:** I will not send you solicitation requests for fundraising.

Verbal Permission: I may use or disclose your PHI to family members that are directly involved in your treatment with your verbal permission.

With Authorization: Uses and disclosures not specifically permitted by applicable law will be made only with your written authorization, which may be revoked at any time, except to the extent that we have already made a use or disclosure based upon your authorization. The following uses and disclosures will be made only with your written authorization: (i) most uses and disclosures of psychotherapy notes which are separated from the rest of your medical record; (ii) most uses and disclosures of PHI for marketing purposes, including subsidized treatment communications; (iii) disclosures that constitute a sale of PHI; and (iv) other uses and disclosures not described in this Notice of Privacy Practices.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR PHI:

You have the following rights regarding PHI I maintain about you. To exercise any of these rights, please submit your request in writing to:

North Star Counseling of Jackson
Sandra Cole, LMSW, ACSW
180 W Michigan Ave, Suite 802, Jackson, MI 49201

Right to inspect and copy: You have the right, which may be restricted only in exceptional circumstances, to inspect and copy PHI that is maintained in a “designated record set”. A designated record set contains mental health/medical and billing records and any other records that are used to make decisions about your care. Your right to inspect and copy PHI will be restricted only in those situations where there is compelling evidence that access would cause serious harm to you or if the information is contained in separately maintained psychotherapy notes. I may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee for copies. If your records are maintained electronically, you may also request an electronic copy of your PHI. You may also request that a copy of your PHI be provided to another person.

Right to amend: If you feel that the PHI I have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask me to amend the information, although I am not required to agree to the amendment. If I deny your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with me. I may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and will provide you with a copy. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Right to an accounting of disclosures: You have the right to request an accounting of certain of the disclosures that I make of your PHI. I may charge a reasonable fee if you request more than one accounting in any 12-month period.

Right to request restrictions: You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the use or disclosure of your PHI for treatment, payment, or health care operations. I am not required to agree to your request unless the request is to restrict disclosure of PHI to a health plan for purposes of carrying out payment or health care operations, and the PHI pertains to a health care item or service that you paid for out of pocket. In that case, I am required to honor your request for a restriction.

Right to request confidential communications: You have the right to request that I communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For instance, you can request that I only contact you at work, home, or by mail. I will accommodate reasonable requests. I may require information regarding how payment will be handled or specification of an alternative address or other method of contact as a condition for accommodating your request. I will not ask you for an explanation of why you are making the request.

Breach Notification: If there is a breach of unsecured PHI concerning you, I may be required to notify you of this breach, including what happened and what you can do to protect yourself.

Right to a copy of this notice: You have a right to have a copy of this notice. This copy can be in either electronic or paper form.

COMPLAINTS:

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you have the right to file a complaint in writing to me, Sandra Cole, LMSW, ACSW at North Star Counseling of Jackson, 180 W Michigan Ave, Suite 802, Jackson, MI 49201, or with the Secretary of Health and Human Services at 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., 20201. *There will be no retaliatory action in response to your filing a complaint.*