

Informed Consent for Minors

MINORS

Parent Authorization for Minor's Mental Health Treatment

In order to authorize mental health treatment for your child, you must have either sole or joint legal custody of your child. If you are separated or divorced from the other parent of your child, please notify me immediately. I will ask you to provide me with a copy of the most recent custody decree that establishes custody rights of you and the other parent or otherwise demonstrates that you have the right to authorize treatment for your child.

If you are separated or divorced from the child's other parent, please be aware that it is my policy to notify the other parent that I am meeting with your child. I believe it is important that all parents have the right to know, unless there are truly exceptional circumstances, that their child is receiving mental health evaluation or treatment.

One risk of child therapy involves disagreement among parents and/or disagreement between parents and the therapists regarding the child's treatment. If such disagreements occur, I will strive to listen carefully so that I can understand your perspectives and fully explain my perspective. We can resolve such disagreements or we can agree to disagree, so long as this enables your child's therapeutic progress. Ultimately, parents decide whether therapy will continue. If either parent decides the therapy should end, I will honor that decision, unless there are extraordinary circumstances. However, in most cases, I will ask that you allow me the option of having a few closing sessions with your child to appropriately end the treatment relationship.

Individual Parent/Guardian Communications With Me

In the course of my treatment of your child, I may meet with the child's parents/guardians either separately or together. Please be aware, however, that, at all times, my patient is your child – not the parents/guardians nor any siblings or other family members of the child will be identified therapy clients with rights of psychological privilege unless a separate written contract is made to conduct family therapy mutually agreed to by the therapist and the parents.

If I meet with you or other family members in the course of your child's treatment, I will make notes of that meeting in your child's treatment records. Please be aware that those notes will be available to any person or entity that has legal access to your child's treatment record as mandated by law.

Mandatory Disclosures of Treatment Information

In some situations, I am required by law or by the guidelines of my profession, to disclose information, whether or not I have your or your child's permission. I have listed some of these situations below.

Confidentiality cannot be maintained when:

- Child patients tell me they plan to cause serious harm or death to themselves, and I believe they have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. I must take steps to inform a parent or guardian or others of what the child has told me and how serious I believe this threat to be and to try to prevent the occurrence of such harm.

- Child patients tell me they plan to cause serious harm or death to someone else, and I believe they have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. In this situation, I must inform a parent or guardian or others, and I may be required to inform the person who is the target of the threatened harm [and the police].
- Child patients are doing things that could cause serious harm to them or someone else even if they do not intend to harm themselves or another person. In these situations, I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether a parent or guardian should be informed.
- Child patients tell me, or I otherwise learn that, it appears that a child is being neglected or abused physically, sexually or emotionally – or that it appears that they have been neglected or abused in the past. In this situation, I am [may be] required by law to report the alleged abuse to the appropriate state child – protective agency.
- I am ordered by a Court to disclose information with proper releases or other legal exceptions.

Disclosure of Minor's Treatment Information to Parents

Therapy is most effective when a trusting relationship exists between the therapist and the patient. Privacy is especially important in earning and keeping that trust. As a result, it is important for children to have a "zone of privacy" where children feel free to discuss personal matters without fear that their thoughts and feelings will be immediately communicated to their parents. This is particularly true for adolescents who are naturally developing a greater sense of independence and autonomy.

It is my policy to provide you with general information about your child's treatment, but NOT to share specific information your child has disclosed to me without your child's agreement. This includes activities and behavior that you would not approve of – or might be upset by – but that do not put your child at risk of serious and immediate harm. However, if your child's risk taking behavior becomes more serious, then I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether your child is in serious and immediate danger of harm. If I feel that your child is in such danger, I will communicate this information to you.

Example: If your child tells me that he/she has tried alcohol at a few parties, I would keep this information confidential. If your child tells me that he/she is drinking and driving or is a passenger in a car with a driver who is drunk, I would NOT keep this information confidential from you. If your child tells me, or if I believe based on things I learned about your child, that your child is addicted to drugs or alcohol, I would NOT keep that information confidential.

Example: If your child tells me that he/she is having voluntary, protected sex with a peer, I would keep this information confidential. If your child tells me, on several occasions, the child has engaged in unprotected sex with strangers or in unsafe situations, I will NOT keep this information confidential.

You can always ask me questions about the type of information I would disclose. You can ask in the form of "hypothetical situations," such as: "If a child told you that he or she was doing _____, would you tell the parents?"

Even when we have agreed to keep your child's treatment information confidential from you, I may believe that it is important for you to know about a particular situation that is going on in your child's life. In these situations, I will encourage your child to tell you, and I will help your child find the best way to do so. Also, when meeting with you, I may sometimes describe your child's problems in general terms, without using specifics, in order to help you know how to be more helpful to your child.

Disclosure of Minor's Treatment Records to Parents

Although the laws of the State of Georgia may give parents the right to see any written records I keep about your child's treatment, by signing this agreement, you are agreeing that your child or teen should have a "zone of privacy" in their meetings with me and you agree not to request access to your child's written treatment records unless ordered by a Court or to transfer the record to another therapist who is serving your child.

As provided elsewhere in this Informed Consent, I do not wish to be involved in the legal system or to speak with anyone regarding testifying in Court. If I am required to testify, I am ethically bound NOT to give my opinion about either parent's custody, visitation suitability, or fitness. Furthermore, if I am required to appear as a witness or to otherwise perform work related to any legal matter, the party responsible for my participation agrees to reimburse me for those amounts stated otherwise in this Informed Consent.

Parent/Guardian of Minor Patient:

Please initial after each line and sign below indicating your agreement to respect your child's privacy:

I will refrain from requesting detailed information about individual therapy sessions with my child. I understand that I will be provided with periodic updates about general progress, and/or may be asked to participate in therapy sessions as needed. _____

Although I may have the legal right to request written records/session notes since my child is a minor, I agree NOT to request these records in order to respect the confidentiality of my child's/adolescent's treatment. _____

I understand that I will be informed about situations that could endanger my child. I know this decision to breach confidentiality in these circumstances is up to the therapist's professional judgment, unless otherwise noted above. _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____