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Adolescent Informed Consent

What You Need to Know

The purpose of meeting with a therapist is to receive help with things that are bothering you or are preventing you from reaching your goals. You may be meeting with a therapist for a variety of reasons. You may have requested help yourself or someone else may have thought you needed a little extra assistance with something going on in your life. In therapy, you will be able to talk about all of this and will also be able to make plans for change.

It is important that you feel comfortable talking to your therapist about the issues that are causing you distress. You may want to talk to someone you can trust but are not ready to talk to your parents. As a teenager, you have rights that are not equal to those of an adult. Privacy, or confidentiality, is a necessary part of therapy which allows you to talk about things that you do not feel comfortable discussing elsewhere out of fear of being judged, made fun of, or getting into trouble.

Information you share in therapy is protected by the right to confidentiality. However, there are exceptions to this rule which you need to understand. There may be situations where your therapist is required by law or by professional ethical guidelines to disclose whether or not you give permission. For examples, see below.

Confidentiality Will be Broken When:

You tell your therapist you plan to cause serious harm or death to yourself and your therapist believes you have both intent and ability to carry out this threat. Your therapist will inform your parents and/or other authorities of what you have revealed. Your safety and the safety of others is our primary concern.

You tell your therapist you plan to cause serious harm or death to some other identified person(s) and your therapist believes you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat. Your therapist will inform your parents and/or other authorities of what you have revealed as well as the person(s) whom you threatened.

You are doing things that cause serious harm to yourself or others even if you do not intend for anyone to be harmed. Your therapist will use his/her best clinical judgment to determine whether your parents or other authorities need to be informed. You reveal you are currently being abused physically, sexually, or emotionally or you have been abused in the past. Your therapist is required by law to report abuse to the Georgia Department of Family and Children's Services.

You are involved in a court case and your therapist is called on by a member of the court to share information about your therapy. Your therapist will work to preserve your confidentiality; however, if the court requires him/her to provide information about your sessions, he/she will be forced to do so. If such a situation occurs, you will be informed by your therapist before any information is disclosed.

Communications with Your Parent(s) or Guardian(s)

Unless issues arise as listed above, information you discuss with your therapist will not be shared with your parents, even if the information you discuss involves things of which your parents do not approve. However, if you share information that your therapist believes puts you at risk, he/she will need to use his/her clinical judgement to determine if you are in serious and immediate danger, he/she will act to protect you by talking with your parent(s), guardian(s) or other authorities. To determine what types of information would be disclosed to your parents or authorities, you are always welcome to ask your therapist hypothetical questions.

If you share important information that does not put you at immediate risk for physical harm but is important to your well-being, your therapist may encourage you to tell your parents with his/her help. Together you will decide what to say to your parents and how to say it. Parents are asked to respect your privacy and the privacy of your records. However, often they can be helpful if they have a general idea of the issues involved and how to actually contribute.

Communication with Others

Schools: Your school may want to discuss your treatment and your therapist might determine talking with your school can be helpful. If your school wants to talk to your therapist or if your therapist wants to talk to someone at your school, permission will need to be given in writing by your parents.

Doctors and Other Healthcare Professionals: Your therapist may find it helpful to talk to your doctor or psychiatrist regarding medication or other issues that he/she believes will help your progress. If this is the case, your therapist will talk to you in session about what he/she needs to discuss with your healthcare provider, particularly if information to be discussed with your provider is not information disclosed to your parents. In any case, written permission will need to be given by your parents.

By signing this form, you are stating that you have reviewed the policies and understand them, including the limits of confidentiality. If you have any questions at this time or at any time during your therapy, feel free to ask your therapist.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Georgia Notice Form concerning the policies and practices protecting my health information.

Adolescent's Signature

Date

Parent or Legal Guardian's Signature

Date

Therapist's Signature

Date