



S O U T H E A S T
P S Y C H O L O G I C A L
S E R V I C E S

SOUTHEAST PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

**Notice of Southeast Psychological Services' Policies and Practices to
Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information**

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

I. Uses and Disclosures for Treatment, Payment, and Health Care Operations

Southeast Psychological Services (hereafter referred to as SPS) may *use* or *disclose* your *protected health information (PHI)*, for *treatment, payment, and health care operations* purposes with your *consent*. To help clarify these terms, here are some definitions:

- “*PHI*” refers to information in your health record that could identify you.
- “*Treatment, Payment and Health Care Operations*”
 - *Treatment* is when SPS provides, coordinates or manages your health care and other services related to your health care. An example of treatment would be when SPS consults with another health care provider, such as your family physician or another psychologist.
 - *Payment* is when SPS obtains reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are when SPS discloses your PHI to your health insurer to obtain reimbursement for your health care or to determine eligibility or coverage.
 - *Health Care Operations* are activities that relate to the performance and operation of our practice. Examples of health care operations are quality assessment and improvement activities, business-related matters such as audits and administrative services, and case management and care coordination.

- “Use” applies only to activities within our practice group, such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “Disclosure” applies to activities outside of our practice group, such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

II. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

SPS may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and health care operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. An “*authorization*” is written permission above and beyond the general consent that permits only specific disclosures. In those instances when SPS is asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment and health care operations, SPS will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. SPS will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your psychotherapy notes. “*Psychotherapy notes*” are notes SPS has made about our conversations during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which SPS has kept separate from the rest of your medical record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI.

You may revoke all such authorizations (of PHI or psychotherapy notes) at any time, provided each revocation is in writing. You may not revoke an authorization to the extent that (1) SPS has relied on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage, and the law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

III. Uses and Disclosures with Neither Consent nor Authorization

SPS may use or disclose PHI without your consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

- **Child Abuse:** If you give us information which leads us to suspect child abuse, neglect, or death due to maltreatment, SPS must report such information to the county Department of Social Services. If asked by the Director of Social Services to turn over information from your records relevant to a child protective services investigation, SPS must do so.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If information you give us gives us reasonable cause to believe that a disabled adult is in need of protective services, SPS must report this to the Director of Social Services.
- **Health Oversight:** The North Carolina Psychology Board has the power, when necessary, to subpoena relevant records should SPS be the focus of an inquiry.

- **Judicial or Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding, and a request is made for information about the professional services that SPS has provided you and/or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and SPS must not release this information without your written authorization, or a court order. This privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** SPS may disclose your confidential information to protect you or others from a serious threat of harm by you.
- **Worker's Compensation:** If you file a workers' compensation claim, SPS is required by law to provide your mental health information relevant to the claim to your employer and the North Carolina Industrial Commission.

IV. Client's Rights and Psychologist's Duties

Client's Rights:

- *Right to Request Restrictions* – You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information about you. However, SPS is not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- *Right to Receive Confidential Communications by Alternative Means and at Alternative Locations* – You have the right to request and receive confidential communications of PHI by alternative means and at alternative locations. (For example, you may not want a family member to know that you are seeing us. Upon your request, SPS will send your bills to another address.)
- *Right to Inspect and Copy* – You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of PHI in our mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. SPS may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases, you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, SPS will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process.
- *Right to Amend* – You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. SPS may deny your request. On your request, SPS will discuss with you the details of the amendment process.
- *Right to an Accounting* – You generally have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of PHI for which you have neither provided consent nor authorization

(as described in Section III of this Notice). On your request, SPS will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.

- *Right to a Paper Copy* – You have the right to obtain a paper copy of the notice from us upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.

Psychologist's Duties:

- SPS is required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- SPS reserves the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless SPS notifies you of such changes, however, SPS is required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- If SPS revises our policies and procedures, SPS will notify you in writing by mail within 30 days.

V. Questions and Complaints

If you have questions about this notice, disagree with a decision SPS make about access to your records, or have other concerns about your privacy rights, you may contact our office manager at 704-552-0116.

If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated and wish to file a complaint with our office, you may send your written complaint to our office manager at:

Southeast Psychological Services
ATTN: Office Manager
6115 Park South Dr., Suite 130
Charlotte, NC 28210

You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The person listed above can provide you with the appropriate address upon request.

You have specific rights under the Privacy Rule. SPS will not retaliate against you for exercising your right to file a complaint.

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions and Changes to Privacy Policy

This notice will go into effect on August 20, 2003.

SPS reserves the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that SPS maintains. SPS will provide you with a revised notice by publishing the changes, posting these changes at SPS and distributing the revised notice to all active clients by postal mail service.