

# HIPAA NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

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

**II. IT IS OUR LEGAL DUTY TO SAFEGUARD YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION (PHI).** By law we are required to insure that your PHI is kept private. (Throughout this document, "we", "us" and "our" refer to Debbie Granovsky, Inc., and to your counselor.) Your PHI constitutes information created or noted by us that can be used to identify you. It contains data about your past, present, or future health or life situation, the provision of counseling or other therapeutic services to you, and the payment for such services.

We keep your Protected Health Information under multiple levels of physical lock and key. When your PHI is stored on our computer, we protect it with passwords, "firewall" hardware/software, and encryption of its content. All information that we hold about you is considered part of your PHI. Some of the information may qualify as "Psychotherapy Notes", a legal classification that provides a higher degree of protection against legally compelled disclosure than the protection given to other PHI.

We are required to provide you with this Notice about our privacy procedures. This Notice must explain when, why, and how we would use and/or disclose your PHI. Use of PHI means when we share, apply, utilize, examine, or analyze information within our practice; PHI is disclosed when we release, transfer, give, or otherwise reveal it to a third party outside our practice. With some exceptions, we may not use or disclose more of your PHI than is necessary to accomplish the purpose for which the use or disclosure is made; however, we are always legally required to follow the privacy practices described in this Notice.

Please note that we reserve the right to change the terms of this Notice and our privacy policies at any time as permitted by law. Any changes will apply to PHI already on file with us. Before we make any important changes to our policies, we will immediately change this Notice and post a new copy of it in our office and on our website. You may also request a copy of this Notice from us, or you can view a copy of it in our office or on our websites.

**III. HOW WE WILL USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR PHI.** We will use and disclose your PHI for many different reasons. Some of the uses or disclosures will require your prior written authorization; others, however, will not. Below you will find the different categories of our uses and disclosures, with some examples.

**A. We may use and disclose your PHI without your consent for the following reasons related to treatment, quality assurance, and business operations:**

**1. For treatment.** We make notes about each session that become part of your PHI. These notes provide continuity from session to session and enable us to monitor progress toward your goals. For instance, before each session we briefly review notes from the previous session.

**2. For quality assurance.** Sometimes we use information without names or other identifying details to confer with other therapists on treatment techniques, strategies, and progress. Such peer consultation is a standard practice among therapists and helps assure that we provide the best possible services to you. For instance, another therapist might suggest a new technique she found to be helpful to a client in a situation similar to one you have brought up in our sessions.

**3. For business operations.** We may use and disclose appropriate and limited details of your PHI such as your name and address to bill and collect payment for the services we have provided to you. For instance, we might make use of a billing company. We may also provide necessary parts of your PHI to our attorney, accountant, business manager, or consultant to make sure that we are in compliance with applicable laws and ethical codes or to ensure that our computer system operates correctly and securely. For instance, we provide your name and address when we submit a charge through a credit card processing company. Whenever we must disclose such information to a third party, we disclose the minimum necessary for the task at hand and we ensure that the party in question is bound by the same confidentiality we observe.

**4. Other disclosures.** Examples: Your consent is not required if you need emergency treatment provided that we attempt to get your consent after treatment is rendered. In the event that we try to get your consent but you are unable to communicate with us (for example, if you are unconscious or in severe pain) but we think that you would consent to such treatment if you could, we may disclose your PHI.

**B. We may also use and/or disclose your PHI without your consent or authorization for the following reasons relating to state, federal, or local law or governing authority:**

**1. When disclosure is required by federal, state, or local law; judicial, board, or administrative proceedings; or, law enforcement.** Example: We may make a disclosure to the appropriate officials when a law requires us to report information to government agencies, law enforcement personnel and/or in an administrative proceeding.

**2. If disclosure is compelled by a party to a proceeding before a court of an administrative agency pursuant to its lawful authority.**

**3. If disclosure is required by a search warrant lawfully issued to a governmental law enforcement agency.**

**4. If disclosure is compelled by the patient or the patient's representative pursuant to Georgia Health and Safety Codes or to corresponding federal statutes or regulations, such as the Privacy Rule that requires this Notice.**

**5. To avoid harm.** We may provide PHI to law enforcement personnel or persons able to prevent or mitigate a serious threat to the health or safety of a person or the public (i.e., adverse reaction to medications).

**6. If disclosure is compelled or permitted by the fact that you are in such mental or emotional condition as to be dangerous to yourself or the person or property of others, and if we determine that disclosure is necessary to prevent the threatened danger.**

**7. If disclosure is mandated by the Georgia Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting law.** For example, if we have a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect, we must report that to the Division of Family and Child Services or similar authority.

**8. If disclosure is mandated by the Georgia Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse Reporting law.** For example, if we have a reasonable suspicion of elder abuse or dependent adult abuse, we must report that to an appropriate authority.

**9. If disclosure is compelled or permitted by the fact that you tell us of a serious/imminent threat of physical violence by you against a reasonably identifiable victim or victims,** we have an obligation to warn the potential victim(s).

**10. For public health activities.** Example: In the event of your death, if a disclosure is permitted or compelled, we may need to give the county coroner information about you.

**11. For health oversight activities.** Example: We may be required to provide information to assist the government in the course of an investigation or inspection of a health care organization or provider.

**12. For specific government functions.** Examples: We may disclose PHI of military personnel and veterans under certain circumstances. Also, we may disclose PHI in the interests of national security, such as protecting the President of the United States or assisting with intelligence operations.

**13. For research purposes.** In certain circumstances, we may provide PHI in order to conduct medical research.

**14. For Workers' Compensation purposes.** We may provide PHI in order to comply with Workers' Compensation laws.

**15. Appointment reminders and health related benefits or services.** Examples: We may use PHI to provide appointment reminders. We may use PHI to give you information about alternative treatment options, or other health care services or benefits we offer.

**16. If an arbitrator or arbitration panel compels disclosure,** when arbitration is lawfully requested by either party, pursuant to subpoena duces tecum (e.g., a subpoena for mental health records) or any other provision authorizing disclosure in a proceeding before an arbitrator or arbitration panel.

**17. If disclosure is required or permitted to a health oversight agency for oversight activities authorized by law.** Example: When compelled by U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services to investigate or assess our compliance with HIPAA regulations.

**18. If disclosure is otherwise specifically required by law.**

### **C. Certain Uses and Disclosures Require You to Have the Opportunity to Object.**

**1. Disclosures to family, friends, or others.** We may provide your PHI to a family member, friend, or other individual who you indicate is involved in your care or responsible for the payment for your health care, unless you object in whole or in part. Retroactive consent may be obtained in emergency situations.

**D. Other Uses and Disclosures Require Your Prior Written Authorization.** In any other situation not described in Sections IIIA, IIIB, and IIIC above, we will request your written authorization before using or disclosing any of your PHI. Even if you have signed an authorization to disclose your PHI, you may later revoke that authorization, in writing, to stop any future uses and disclosures (assuming that we haven't taken any action subsequent to the original authorization) of your PHI by us.

**IV. WHAT RIGHTS YOU HAVE REGARDING YOUR PHI** These are your rights with respect to your PHI:

**A. The Right to See and Get Copies of Your PHI.** In general, you have the right to see your PHI that is in our possession, or to get copies of it; however, you must request it in writing. (Psychotherapy Notes are excepted by law from this provision.) If we do not have your PHI, but we know who does, we will advise you how you can get it. You will receive a response from us within 30 days of our receiving your written request. Under certain circumstances, we may feel we must deny your request, but if we do, we will give you, in writing, the reasons for the denial. We will also explain your right to have our denial reviewed.

If you ask for copies of your PHI, we will charge you not more than \$.25 per page. We may see fit to provide you with a summary or explanation of the PHI, but only if you agree to it, as well as to the cost, in advance.

**B. The Right to Request Limits on Uses and Disclosures of Your PHI.** You have the right to ask that we limit how we use and disclose your PHI. While we will consider your request, we are not legally bound to agree. If we do agree to your request, we will put those limits in writing and abide by them except in emergency situations. You do not have the right to limit the uses and disclosures that we are legally required or permitted to make.

**C. The Right to Choose How We Send Your PHI to You.** It is your right to ask that your PHI be sent to you at an alternate address (for example, sending information to your work address rather than your home address) or by an alternate method (for example, via email instead of by regular mail). We are obliged to agree to your request providing that we can give you the PHI, in the format you requested, without undue inconvenience. We may not require an explanation from you as to the basis of your request as a condition of providing communications on a confidential basis.

**D. The Right to Get a List of the Disclosures We Have Made.** You are entitled to a list of disclosures of your PHI that we have made. The list will not include uses or disclosures to which you have already consented, i.e., those for treatment, payment, or health care operations, sent directly to you, or to your family; neither will the list include disclosures made for national security purposes, to corrections or law enforcement personnel, or disclosures made before March 1, 2004. After March 1, 2004, disclosure records will be held for six years.

We will respond to your request for an accounting of disclosures within 60 days of receiving your request. The list we give you will include disclosures made in the previous six years (the first six year period being 2004-2010) unless you indicate a shorter period. The list will include the date of the disclosure, to whom PHI was disclosed (including their address, if known), a description of the information disclosed, and the reason for the disclosure. We will provide the list to you at no cost, unless you make more than one request in the same year, in which case we will charge you a reasonable sum based on a set fee for each additional request.

**E. The Right to Amend Your PHI.** If you believe that there is some error in your PHI or that important information has been omitted, it is your right to request that we correct the existing information or add the missing information. Your request and the reason for the request must be made in writing. You will receive a response within 60 days of our receipt of your request. We may deny your request, in writing, if we find that: the PHI is (a) correct and complete, (b) forbidden to be disclosed, (c) not part of our records, or (d) written by someone other than us. Our denial must be in writing and must state the reasons for the denial. It must also explain your right to file a written statement objecting to the denial. If you do not file a written objection, you still have the right to ask that your request and our denial be attached to any future disclosures of your PHI. If we approve your request, we will make the change(s) to your PHI. Additionally, we will tell you that the changes have been made, and we will advise all others who need to know about the change(s) to your PHI.

**F. The Right to Get This Notice by Email.** You have the right to get this notice by email. You have the right to request a paper copy of it, as well.

**V. HOW TO COMPLAIN ABOUT OUR PRIVACY PRACTICES** If, in your opinion, we may have violated your privacy rights, or if you object to a decision we made about access to your PHI, you are entitled to file a complaint with the person listed in Section VI below. You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C. If you file a complaint about our privacy practices, we will take no retaliatory action against you.

**VI. PERSON TO CONTACT FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THIS NOTICE OR TO COMPLAIN ABOUT OUR PRIVACY PRACTICES** If you have any questions about this notice or any complaints about our privacy practices, or would like to know how to file a complaint with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, please contact Debbie Granovsky, LCSW, 1260 Concord Rd, Suite 104, Smyrna, GA 30080, tel. 404-275-9658.

**VII. EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS NOTICE** 2006 OCT 01 This notice took effect October 1, 2006