

## **Notice of Policies and Practices to Protect Your Privacy**

The Brenner Assessment Center is committed to providing services in a manner that acknowledges the uniqueness and dignity of our clients. We understand the information you share with us is personal and we are committed to protecting your privacy.

In addition, you have specific rights to privacy and access to information concerning your protected health information under federal and state law. The federal law is known as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Protected health information (PHI) refers to any information in your health record that could identify you.

Parents and legal guardians of minor children have the same rights on behalf of their children or those in their care, until those children reach their 18th birthday.

This is an important document. Your access to information, the extent of your privacy, and the release of psychological information are explained. It is our legal and ethical responsibility to you to make sure you receive sufficient information to understand your rights. If you have questions, please ask our staff. Your acknowledgement of this notice is required before services can be provided.

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### **Privacy while receiving services and confidentiality of records and communications**

Information about you or the services you receive will not be shared outside this center unless you specifically authorize it in writing. You may cancel all such authorizations at any time by submitting a written notice. Exceptions to this are information already shared with your authorization or information needed to obtain payment from your insurer.

Within the center, only the minimal information necessary to provide services is shared and only with those staff who have a need to know. Information may be shared for the purposes of coordinating your assessment or related services and receiving supervision. In addition, information may be shared to obtain reimbursement from your health insurer, to determine eligibility and obtain prior approval, or in the process of an audit.

Certain circumstances allow the use or release of information without your authorization. While it is our policy to obtain permission if possible, we are not required to in order to protect you or others from harm or to comply with federal law. These exceptions to confidentiality include the following instances:

- 1) In an emergency, we may communicate with emergency or related personnel to ensure your safety or arrange for treatment;
- 2) When there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect of minors, elders (age 60 or older), or people with disabilities, we are mandated to submit a report to appropriate authorities;
- 3) If you communicate an explicit threat to harm yourself or another identified person, we may contact family members or other individuals who can assist in protecting you, arrange for hospitalization, or notify law enforcement; in the event another person may be at risk, we are mandated to take specific precautions which may include warning the potential victim, notifying law enforcement, or arranging for hospitalization;
- 4) If required by law or judicial procedure overriding privileged information related to court proceedings or evaluations requested by a third-party or the court, we may communicate the requested information;
- 5) If you are a member of the armed forces, we may be compelled to release information to the military;

- 6) For government concerns about national security, the safety of the President or related personnel, we may be compelled to release information.
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### **Rights concerning consent to treatment and access to information**

You also have specific rights related to access to information in your health record, and information about the staff, services, or administrative operations. This includes the following liberties and privileges:

- Receipt of confidential communications at an alternate telephone or address other than your home upon request;
  - The name and specialty of any person responsible for your assessment, supervision of staff, or the coordination of your assessment upon request;
  - Informed consent, meaning a full explanation of services provided and any potential risks;
  - A copy of any rules or regulations that apply to the conduct of staff upon request;
  - Information about financial assistance available;
  - The ability to refuse services by particular students or staff without jeopardizing services, and the ability to refuse to participate in research or to refuse services when primarily provided for educational or informational purposes;
  - An itemized statement of charges submitted to any third party upon request;
  - The ability to inspect your medical records or receive a copy for a fee equal to copying expenses, not including information obtained from other agencies; we may provide a summary as an alternative if there is compelling evidence that releasing your record would endanger you or another person;
  - An explanation of any relationship the Center or its staff has with other agencies related to services you receive, including an explanation of ownership or financial interest as it relates to services you receive;
  - The freedom to request an amendment of your record if you feel it is incorrect or incomplete; we may disagree with good cause and you may request a review of such a decision;
  - An accounting of disclosures of your information for purposes other than treatment, payment, health care operations, or those made with your authorization;
  - The ability to express complaints without being compromised for making the complaint.
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### **For more information**

If you would like more information about your privacy rights, or are concerned that we have violated your rights, please contact our Privacy Officer at 617-564-9469. Complaints must be made in writing. You may also file written complaints to the Director, Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at 800-221-9393. Any person whose rights are violated may file legal or civil action in accordance with law.

This notice is effective as of April 14, 2003. We reserve the right to change this notice and our privacy practices. Revised notices will be posted in our office and made available on request.