

# Megan Bearce, LMFT, LLC

## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

*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.*

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

I 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” is when I provide, coordinate or manage your health care and other services related to your health care. An example of treatment would be when I consult with another health care provider, such as your family physician or another psychologist.

#### “Payment”

I may use and disclose health information about you so that the services you receive may be billed to and payment may be collected from you, an insurance company, or another third party. For example, if your health plan requests a copy of your health records, or a portion thereof, in order to determine whether or not payment is warranted under the terms of your policy or contract, I am permitted to use and disclose your personal health information.

#### “Health Care Operations”

These are activities that relate to the performance and operation of my 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. Sometimes I may hire outside parties to help with certain health care operations, such as computer maintenance performed by outside companies. If such outside parties will have any access to your health information when they are performing their jobs, we will require that they appropriately safeguard your information. This list of examples is for illustration only and is not an exclusive list of all of the potential uses and disclosures that may be made for health care operations.

“Use” applies only to activities within my [office, clinic, practice group, etc.] such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.

“Disclosure” applies to activities outside of my [office, clinic, practice group, etc.], such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

### **II. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization**

I 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 I am asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment and health care operations, I will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. I will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your psychotherapy notes. “Psychotherapy notes” are notes I have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which I have 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) I have 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.

612-356-4789

600 Twelve Oaks Center Dr., Suite 215, Wayzata, MN 55391  
www.meganbearce.com

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## III. Uses and Disclosures with Neither Consent nor Authorization

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

- **Child Abuse:** If, in my professional capacity, a child comes before me which I have reasonable cause to suspect is an abused or maltreated child, or I have reasonable cause to suspect a child is abused or maltreated where the parent, guardian, custodian or other person legally responsible for such child comes before me in my professional or official capacity and states from personal knowledge facts, conditions or circumstances which, if correct, would render the child an abused or maltreated child, I must report such abuse or maltreatment to the statewide central register of child abuse and maltreatment, or the local child protective services agency.
- **Health Oversight:** If there is an inquiry or complaint about my professional conduct to the Minnesota State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy, I must furnish to the Minnesota Board of Marriage and Family Therapy your confidential mental health records relevant to this 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 I have provided you and/or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I 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. I must inform you in advance if this is the case. Or if disclosure is compelled by the patient or the patient's representative pursuant to Minnesota Statute 144.335 "Access to Health Records" or by corresponding federal statutes or regulations (e.g., the federal "Privacy Rule," which requires this Notice).
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** I 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 worker's compensation claim, and I am treating you for the issues involved with that complaint, then I must furnish to the chairman of the Worker's Compensation Board records that contain information regarding your psychological condition and treatment.
- **Required by Law:** I may use or disclose health information about you when compelled or permitted by state or federal law.

## IV. Patient's Rights and Therapist's Duties

### Patient'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, I am 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 me. Upon your request, I will send correspondences to another address.)
- *Right to Inspect and Copy* – You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of PHI and psychotherapy notes in my mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases, you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, I 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. I may deny your request. On your request, I 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, I will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.

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- *Right to a Paper Copy* – You have the right to obtain a paper copy of the notice from me upon request.

## Therapist's Duties:

- I am required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of my legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- I reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless I notify you of such changes, however, I am required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- If I revise my policies and procedures, I will mail the revised Notice to you, as well as making it available in my office.

## V. Questions and Complaints

If you have questions about this notice, disagree with a decision I make about access to your records, or have other concerns about your privacy rights, you may contact me directly.

If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated and wish to file a complaint with me, you may send your written complaint to Megan Bearce, LMFT, 600 Twelve Oaks Center Drive, Suite 215, Wayzata, MN 55391. You may also send a written complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and/or the Minnesota Board of Marriage and Family Therapy. You have specific rights under the Privacy Rule. I 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 October 2010.

I reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that I maintain. I will provide you with a revised notice by either distributing it to you in the office or mailing it to your designated address.