

Vorpahl Psychology Associates, LLC  
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Phone: 508.242.9666, Fax: 815.572.8941

[www.vpa-psychologist.com](http://www.vpa-psychologist.com)

## NOTICE OF PRIVACY POLICIES TO PROTECT THE PRIVACY OF YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION

REVISED 9/16/2013

**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 read it carefully!**

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

We 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 chart that could identify you.
- “Treatment, Payment and Health Care Operations”

**Treatment** is when we provide, coordinate or manage your health care and other services related to your health care. An example of treatment would be when we consult with another health care provider, such as your PCP or another therapist.

**Payment** is when we obtain reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are when we disclose 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 case coordination.

**Use** applies to activities within our practice, such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.

**Disclosure** applies to activities outside of our practice, such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

## II. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

We 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 we are asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment and health care operations, we will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. We will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your psychotherapy notes. “*Psychotherapy notes*” are notes we have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which we have kept separate from the rest of your chart. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI. It is VPA’s policy not to keep separate psychotherapy notes. All documentation we keep is a part of your clinical chart.

We will also obtain an authorization from you before using or disclosing PHI in a way that has not been described in this notice.

We will not use your PHI for marketing or sales purposes under any conditions.

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

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

- **Child Abuse:** If any of the clinicians at VPA, in their professional capacity, have reasonable cause to believe that a minor child is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon him or her which causes harm or substantial risk or harm to the child’s health or welfare (including sexual abuse), or from neglect, including malnutrition, they must immediately report such a condition to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If any of the clinicians at VPA have reasonable cause to believe that an elderly person (age 60 or older) is suffering or has died as a result of abuse, they must immediately make a report to the Massachusetts Department of Elder Affairs.
- **Health Oversight:** The Board of Registration that applies to our particular license to practice has the power, when necessary, to subpoena relevant records should we 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 your diagnosis and treatment and the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law and we will not release information without written authorization from you or your legally-appointed representative, or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the court evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in this case.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** If you communicate to any of the clinicians at VPA an explicit threat to kill or inflict serious bodily injury upon an identified person and you have the apparent intent and ability to carry out the threat, they must take reasonable precautions. Reasonable precautions may include warning the potential victim, notifying law enforcement, or arranging for your hospitalization. They must also do so if they know you to have a history of physical violence and they believe there is a clear and present danger that you will attempt to kill or inflict bodily injury upon an identified person.

Furthermore, if you present a clear and present danger to yourself and refuse to accept further appropriate treatment and they have a reasonable basis to believe that you can be committed to a hospital, they must seek said commitment and may contact members of your family or other individuals if it would assist in protecting you.

- **Workers Compensation:** If you file a worker's compensation claim, your records relevant to that claim will not be confidential to entities such as your employer, the insurer and the Division of Worker's Compensation.

When the use and disclosure without your consent or authorization is allowed under sections of Section 164.512 of the Privacy Rule and the state's confidentiality law, this includes certain narrowly defined disclosures to law enforcement agencies, to a health oversight agency (such as HHS or a state department of health), to a coroner or medical examiner, for public health purposes relating to disease or FDA-regulated products, or for specialized government functions such as fitness for military duties, eligibility for VA benefits, and national security and intelligence.

#### IV. Patient's Rights and Mental Health Clinician'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, we are not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- **Right to Receive Confidential Communications by Alternative Means and 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, we will send your bills to another address). This request must be made in writing.
- **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. We may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases, you may have the decision reviewed. On your written request, we will discuss with you the details of the amendment 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. We may deny your request. On your written request, we 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 written request, we 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 written request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.

- **Right to Restrict Disclosures When You Have Paid for Your Care Out-of-Pocket:** You have the right to restrict certain disclosures of PHI to a health plan when you pay out-of-pocket or in full for our services.
- **Right to Be Notified if There is a Breach of Your Unsecured PHI:** You have a right to be notified if: (a) there is a breach (a use or disclosure of your PHI in violation of the HIPAA Privacy Rule) involving your PHI; (b) that PHI has not been encrypted to government standards; and (c) my risk assessment fails to determine that there is a low probability that your PHI has been compromised.

Mental Health Clinician's Duties:

- We are 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.
- We reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in the notice. Unless we notify you of such changes, however, we are required to abide by the terms currently in effect. If we revise our policies and procedures, we will notify current clients and post the new policies in the waiting area.

V. Complaints

If you are concerned that we have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we made about access to your records, you may contact our Privacy Officer: Kai Vorpahl at 508.333.4300. 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.

VI. Effective Date and Changes to Privacy Policy

This notice will go into effect September 23, 2013. We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that we maintain. We will notify current clients of changes in person or by mail and closed client cases can, if interested, call and ask if our policies have changed and obtain a copy by mail or view one in our waiting area.

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**CONSENT TO USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION**

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

This form is an agreement between you \_\_\_\_\_ and Vorpahl Psychology Associates, LLC. When we use the word “you” below it will mean your child, relative, or other person if you have written his name here.

When we examine, diagnose, treat, or refer you we will be collecting what the law calls Protected Health Information (PHI) about you. We need to use this information here to decide on what treatment is best for you and to provide treatment to you. We may also share this information with others who provide treatment to you or need it to arrange payment for your treatment or for other business or government functions.

By signing this form you are agreeing that you have read and understand our Notice of Privacy Policies and you are agreeing to let us use your information here and send it to others in accordance with our written policies. Please make sure you have read and understand our Privacy Policies above before signing this Consent form.

**If you do not sign this consent form agreeing to what is in our Notice of Privacy Policies, we cannot treat you.**

In the future we may change how we use and share your information and so may change our Notice of Privacy Policies. If we do change it, you can get a copy from our website: [www.vpa-psychologist.com](http://www.vpa-psychologist.com), or by calling us at 508.498.9667, or from our privacy officer, Kai Vorpahl.

If you are concerned about some of your information, you have the right to ask us not to use or share some of your information for treatment, payment, or administrative purposes. You will have to tell us what you want in writing. Although we will try to respect your wishes, we are not required to agree to these limitations. However, if we do agree, we promise to comply with your wish.

After you have signed this consent, you have the right to revoke it (by writing a letter telling us you no longer consent) and we will comply with your wishes about using or sharing your information from that time on but we may already have used or shared some of your information and cannot change that.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of client or personal representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of client or personal representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date NPP received by client or representative