

Notice of Privacy Practices

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.

Uses and Disclosures for Treatment, Payment and Health Care Operations

Tri-Lakes Relational Center- Springfield (TRC-S) may use or disclose your protected health information (PHI) for treatment, payment, and health care operations for the purposes within your written authorization. To help clarify these terms, here are some definitions:

- The term “PHI” refers to information in your health record that could identify you.
- “Treatment, Payment and Health Care Operations”
 - Treatment is when we provide, coordinate, or manage your mental health care and related services. An example would be when your counselor consults with another health care provider, such as your family physician or another counselor.
 - Payment is when TRC-S is reimbursed for services provided to you. Examples of payment related disclosures are when information is disclosed to your health insurer for the purposes of reimbursement to you or to determine eligibility or coverage.
 - Health Care Operations are activities that relate to the operation of TRC-S’ office practices. Examples are quality assessment and improvement activities, business related matters such as audits and administrative services, and case management and care coordination.
- “Use” applies to actions within TRC-S such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “Disclosure” applies to activities outside of TRC-S such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.
- “Authorization” is your written permission to disclose confidential mental health information. All authorizations to disclose must be on a specific legally required form.

Other uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

TRC-S may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of regular treatment, payment, or health care operation only when you sign a specific authorization for that purpose. An “authorization” is written permission above and beyond the general consent that permits the normal PHI disclosures. An example would be if an attorney or one of your family members wanted to know about your treatment. In those instances, your TRC-S counselor would obtain written authorization from you before releasing this information.

PHI normally includes information such as the date and time of a session, the type of session (individual, couples, testing, etc.), fee, diagnosis codes, basic treatment plan, and your counselor’s name, credentials and signature. “Psychotherapy Notes” are more detailed and sensitive notes made about your conversations during a counseling session which your counselor has kept separate from the rest of your medical record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI. TRC-S will need to obtain signed authorization from you before releasing these notes.

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) TRC-S has relied on that authorization and already followed through on the action you authorized; 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.

Uses and Disclosures with Neither Consent nor Authorization

TRC-S may use or disclose PHI *without* your consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

- **Child Abuse:** If TRC-S has reasonable cause to believe a child under the age of 18 has been abused or neglected, TRC-S must report this belief to the appropriate authorities.
- **Adult Abuse:** If TRC-S has reasonable cause to believe that a disabled adult or elder person has had a physical injury or injuries inflicted upon such disabled adult or elder person, other than by accidental means, or has been neglected or exploited, TRC-S must report that concern to the appropriate authorities.

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- **Health Oversight Activities:** TRC-S may disclose PHI regarding you to a health oversight agency for oversight activities authorized by law, including licensure and disciplinary activities. An example would be to the Missouri State Committee of Licensed Professional Counselors.
- **Judicial and Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made about professional services TRC-S provided you or the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and TRC-S will not release information without your written consent or a court order. The 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:** If your provider at TRC-S determines, or pursuant of the standards of their profession would determine, that you present a serious danger of violence to yourself or someone else, TRC-S may disclose information in order to provide protection against such danger for you or the intended victim.
- **Worker's Compensation:** TRC-S may disclose PHI regarding you as authorized by and to the extent necessary to comply with laws relating to worker's compensation or other similar programs, established by law, that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness without regard to fault.

Patient's rights and Therapist's Duties

- *Right to request restrictions:* You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of PHI. However, TRC-S 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 a clinician at TRC-S. On your written request, TRC-S will send your bills to another address.
- *Right to inspect and copy:* You have the right to look at and/or obtain a copy of PHI and psychotherapy notes in the mental health and billing records used to make decision about you for as long as PHI is maintained in the record. TRC-S may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, TRC-S will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process. If you desire copies, we will charge a fee for costs associated with our request including the cost of copies, mailing or other supplies in accordance with Federal and/or State regulations.
- *Right to amend:* You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. TRC-S may deny your request. On your request, TRC-S will discuss with you the details of the amendment process.
- *Right to accounting:* You generally have the right to receive an accounting of the disclosures of PHI. On your request, TRC-S will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.
- *Right to a paper copy:* You have a right to obtain a paper copy of this notice upon request, even if you have agreed to receive this notice electronically.

Tri-Lakes Relational Center- Springfield's Duties

- TRC-S is required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of TRC-S' legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- TRC-S reserves the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless TRC-S notifies you of such changes, however, TRC-S is required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- If TRC-S revises its policies and procedures, TRC-S will provide you with an updated notice at your next scheduled visit to your facilities or by mail. TRC-S will also post this notice in a public area in its office.

Complaints

If you are concerned that TRC-S has violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision made about your access to records, you may contact, Joshua Spurlock, of TRC-S at (417) 496.1867.

You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Information about filing such a complaint can be found online at: www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacyhowtofile.htm or the person listed above can provide you with the appropriate address upon request. Please note that you will not receive retaliation for filing a complaint with either TRC-S or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Effective Date, Restrictions, and Changes to Privacy Policy

This policy went into effect on June 20, 2008. TRC-S reserves the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that TRC-S maintains. TRC-S will provide you with a revised notice at the time of your next visit to our facilities or by mail.