

NOTICE OF THE SAMARITAN COUNSELING CENTER, INC. PRIVACY PRACTICES

This notice explains how we use your health information at our Center, how we might disclose your health information to others and how you can get access to the same information. Please review this notice carefully and ask for clarification about anything you might not understand. You may request additional copies of this notice at no charge to you at any time.

We have a **legal responsibility** under the laws of the United States and the state of Alabama to keep your health information private. Part of our responsibility is to give you this notice about our privacy practices. Another part of our responsibility is to follow the practices in this notice.

This notice takes effect on April 14, 2003 and will be in effect until we replace it or the law changes.

We have the right to change our privacy practices as long as those changes are permitted or required by law.

Any changes in privacy practices effect how we protect your private health information. This includes private health information that we create at The Samaritan Counseling Center, Inc. and any private health information we receive about you from other health care providers.

If you have any questions or concerns about the material in this document, please ask us for assistance which we will provide at no charge to you.

Here are some examples of how we use and disclose information about your health information.

We may use or disclose your health information...

1. To any Center staff involved in your treatment program.
2. To any person required by federal, state, or local laws to have lawful access to your treatment.
3. To receive payment from a third party for services we provide for you.
4. To our own staff in connection with our Center's operations. Examples of these include, but are not limited to the following: evaluating the effectiveness of and supervision of our staff, improving the quality of our services and meeting accreditation standards and in connection with licensing, credentialing, or certification activities.
5. To anyone you provide us written authorization to have your health information. You may revoke this authorization in writing anytime. When you revoke an authorization it will only affect new disclosures of your private health information.
6. If you are on active duty in the armed forces and referred for individual therapy, we are required to submit clinical assessments and updates to your primary care physician or the psychiatrist at your designated military treatment facility.
7. To a previously identified emergency contact person, family member, guardian, or person responsible for your care in the event of an emergency. If you are present in such a case, we will give you an opportunity to object. If you object, or are not present, or are incapable of responding, we may use our best professional judgment in consideration of the emergency, to use or disclose your health information in your best interest. We will only use or disclose the aspects your health information that are necessary to respond to the emergency.
8. You should know that there are certain situations in which your clinician is *required* by law to reveal information obtained during therapy to other persons or agencies *without your permission*. Also, your counselor is not required to inform you of his/her actions in this regard. These situations are:
 - a. If you threaten grave bodily harm or death to yourself or someone else, your clinician is required by law to inform the intended victim and appropriate law enforcement agencies.
 - b. If a court order is given requiring information about your case, your clinician is required by law to provide the information specifically described in the order.
 - c. If you reveal information which gives your clinician a reason to suspect child or elder abuse or neglect, your clinician must report his/her knowledge or suspicions to the Department of Human Resources.

- d. If you are in therapy by order of a court of law, the results of the treatment ordered must be revealed to the court.
- e. If you file civil or criminal charges against your clinician, or if you file an ethics complaint with a licensing board, your clinician is permitted to use your records to defend against your charges or complaints.

We will not use your health information in any of our Center's marketing, development, public relations, or related activities without your written authorization. We will not disclose in any way that constitutes a sale of your PHI.

We cannot use or disclose your health information in any way other than those described in this notice unless you give us written permission.

As a client of The Samaritan Counseling Center, Inc. **you have these important rights:**

1. With limited exceptions, you can make a written request to inspect the documentation of your private health information during a scheduled appointment.
2. Generally we do not release records directly to clients without review during a session, but we will release them to attorneys, physicians or other therapists with a written release to do so.
3. You have a right to a copy of this notice at no charge.
4. You can make a written request to have us communicate with you about your health information by alternative means, at an alternative location. (An example would be if your primary language is not spoken at this Center, and we are treating a child of whom you have lawful custody.) Your written request must specify the alternative means and location.
5. You can make a written request that we place other restrictions on the ways we use or disclose your health information. We may deny any or all of your requested restrictions. If we agree to these restrictions, we will abide by them in all situations except those which, in our professional judgment, constitute an emergency.
6. At your written request, SCC will not disclose information about your care to your health insurance company if you pay out of pocket for services.
7. You have the right to request communication via text or email but we cannot guarantee that your private health information is secure in that transmission.
8. You can make a written request that we place an amendment to the information in part "1" above.
9. You may place a written statement in our records disagreeing with our documentation.
10. We will also notify anyone else who may have received the previous documentation.
11. You may make a written request that we provide you with a list of those occasions where we or our business associates disclosed your health information for purposes other than treatment, payment, or our Center's operations. This can go back as far as six years, but not before April 14, 2003.
12. If you request the accounting in "11" above more than once in a 12 month period we may charge you a fee based on our actual costs of tabulating these disclosures.

If you believe we have violated any of your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we have made about any of your rights in this notice you may complain to us in writing to the compliance officer below.

Nancy W. Thomas, CCMHC, LPC
Executive Director of Clinical Services
The Samaritan Counseling Center, Inc...
2911 Zelda Road
Montgomery, AL 36106

You may also submit a written complaint to the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The address is as follows:

Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Civil Rights
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

