

Privacy Policy For Clients

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I am committed to collecting, using and disclosing personal information responsibly and only to the extent necessary for the services I provide. The following information describes my privacy policy.

What is personal information?

Personal information is information about an identifiable individual. It includes information that relates to an individual's personal characteristics (e.g. gender, age, address, phone #, education, family circumstances), health status (e.g. health history, conditions, services received), or activities and views (e.g., occupation, opinions, ideas). Personal information is different from business information (e.g., an individual's business address and telephone number), which is not protected by privacy legislation.

My primary purpose for collecting personal information:

Like all psychologists, I collect, use and disclose personal information to provide psychological services to my clients. For example, I collect information about a client's health history, family history, and psychosocial functioning to determine their mental health needs and provide options for the provision of psychological services. I also collect information to provide a baseline and ongoing record of psychological functioning so that treatment progress and interventions can be monitored over time. Personal information is never disclosed to other healthcare providers without the client's written consent.

In some situations, the primary purpose of collecting personal information will be to conduct an assessment to provide a professional opinion about a person's psychological functioning. With the client's consent, this professional opinion would be reported to the appropriate person or agency (e.g., insurance company, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board).

Additional reasons for collecting personal information:

- To invoice clients for services that were not paid for at the time, or to collect unpaid accounts.
- Psychologists are regulated by the College of Psychologists of Ontario who may inspect my records as part of their regulatory activities in the public interest.
- To obtain access to third party (e.g. insurance company) payment of services and to provide information to demonstrate client entitlement to this funding.

Protecting personal information:

To protect your personal information, I have taken the following steps:

- Paper information is either under supervision or secured in a locked area.
- Electronic hardware is either under supervision or secured in a locked area. Encryption and passwords are used on all computers

Limits to the protection of information:

As mentioned in the *Request for Services Consent Form*, there are certain circumstances where I am legally obligated to disclose information to the appropriate authorities. These include the Children's Aid Society if a child is being abused or is at risk, the regulatory body of a healthcare practitioner if they have been engaging in sexual misconduct, and the courts if my file is subpoenaed. It also includes taking whatever steps necessary to ensure safety if a client is imminently at risk of hurting him/herself or others.

Retention and destruction of personal information:

I need to retain personal information for a certain amount of time to ensure that a) I can answer any questions you may have about the services provided, and b) I can be accountable to my own regulatory body.

- I retain client information for a minimum of ten years to enable me to respond to client questions and to provide ongoing services. The College of Psychologists of Ontario also requires me to retain client records for this period of time. For adolescents, records are retained for ten years following their 18th birthday.
- Paper records are shredded and electronic records are deleted. The hard drive is physically destroyed if it is being discarded. Alternatively, I may send some or all of a client's file to the client.

You can look at your information:

With only a few exceptions, you have the right to look at the personal information in your file. All you have to do is ask. I can review the file with you, or help you understand any information that is unclear (e.g., short forms, technical language). I reserve the right to charge a nominal fee for such requests. I may ask you to put your request in writing. In rare situations, I may be unable to give you access. In such cases, I will provide you with a written explanation within 30 days.

If you believe there is a mistake in the information, you have the right to ask for it to be corrected. This applies to factual information and not to any professional opinions I have formed. Where we agree that a mistake was made, I will make the correction and notify anyone to whom the information was sent. If I do not agree that a mistake was made, I will include a brief statement regarding your disagreement in the clinical record and forward this statement to anyone else who received the earlier information.

If you have a question:

Please contact me immediately if you have any questions or concerns regarding my privacy practices or any services you receive. If I cannot satisfy your request, you have the right to complain to my regulatory body:

The College of Psychologists of Ontario

500 - 110 Eglinton Ave. West, Toronto, ON M4R 1A3

Tel: (1-800-489-8388), Fax: (416-961-2635)

For more general inquiries, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Canada oversees the administration of the privacy legislation in the private sector. The Commissioner also acts as a kind of ombudsman for privacy disputes. This person can be reached at:

The Information and Privacy Commissioner

112 Kent Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1H3

Tel: (613) 995-8210, Fax: (613) 947-6850