



NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

NEW CLIENTS. The following is important information about treatment, confidentiality, and office policy. It also contains summary information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Please read it carefully and if you have any questions, your provider will discuss them with you. HIPAA is a federal law that provides privacy protection and patient rights regarding the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) which contains personal information about you and your health and includes information that may identify you and that relates to your past, present, or future physical or mental health or condition and the related health care services. We are required by law to protect your health information. HIPAA requires that we provide you with a Notice of Privacy Practices for use and disclosure of PHI for treatment, payment, and health care operations. 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. The law requires that we obtain your signature acknowledging that we have provided you with this information. You and your provider can discuss any questions you have about these procedures in your first or second session. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you, your provider, and Mares Cares Counseling, LLC. You may revoke this agreement in writing at any time. That revocation will be binding unless: we have acted in reliance on it, if there are obligations imposed on us by your health insurer, in order to process or substantiate claims made under your policy, and/or if you have not satisfied any financial obligations you have to us.

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how we may use and disclose your PHI in accordance with applicable law, including HIPAA, regulations promulgated under HIPAA including the HIPAA Privacy and Security Rules. It also describes your rights regarding how you may gain access to and control your PHI.

We are required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI. We are required to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices. We reserve the right to change the terms of our Notice of Privacy Practices at any time. Any new Notice of Privacy Practices will be effective for all PHI that we maintain at that time. We will provide you with a copy of the revised Notice of Privacy Practices by posting a copy on our website, sending a copy, to you in the mail upon request or providing one to you at your next appointment.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU.

For Treatment. Your PHI may be used and disclosed by those who are involved in your care for the purpose of providing, coordinating, or managing your health care treatment and related services. This includes consultation with clinical supervisors or other treatment team members. We may disclose PHI to any other consultant only with your authorization.

For Payment. We may use and disclose PHI so that we can receive payment for the treatment services provided to you. This will only be done with your authorization. Examples of payment-related

activities include making a determination of eligibility for coverage for insurance benefits, processing claims with your insurance company, reviewing services provided to you to determine medical necessity, or undertaking utilization review activities. If it becomes necessary to use collection processes due to a lack of payment for services, we will only disclose the minimum amount of PHI necessary for purposes of collection.

For Health Care Operations. We may use or disclose, as needed, your PHI in order to support our business activities including, but not limited to, quality assessment activities, employee review activities, licensing, and conducting or arranging for other business activities. For example, we may share your PHI with third parties that perform various business activities (e.g. billing services) provided we have a written contract with the business that requires it to safeguard the privacy of your PHI. For training or teaching purposes PHI will be disclosed only with your authorization.

Required by Law. Under the law, we must disclose your PHI to you upon your request. In addition, we must make disclosures to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services for the purpose of investigating or determining our compliance with the requirements of the Privacy Rule.

42 CFR STATEMENT. Staff shall not convey to a person outside of Mares Cares Counseling, LLC that a client receives services from Mares Cares Counseling, LLC or disclose any information identifying a client as an alcohol or other substance user unless the client consents in writing for the release of information, the disclosure is legally allowed by a court order, or the disclosure is made to a qualified personnel for a medical emergency, research, audit, or evaluation purposes. Federal laws and regulations do not protect any threat to commit a crime, any information about a crime committed by a client either at Mares Cares Counseling, LLC or against any person who works for Mares Cares Counseling, LLC. Federal laws and regulations do not protect any information about suspected child abuse or neglect from being reported under state law to appropriate state or local authorities.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND EXPECTATIONS TO CONFIDENTIALITY.

Federal and Ohio law require that issues discussed with a therapist or counselor be confidential. The information you reveal will not be discussed by the provider with anyone, other than the exceptions listed below, without a signed authorization from you.

Without Authorization. Following is a list of the categories of uses and disclosures permitted by HIPAA without an authorization. Applicable law and ethical standards permit us to disclose information about you without your authorization only in a limited number of situations. The release of confidential materials may be legally required of your provider in the following situations:

- **Suspected Child or Elder Abuse or Neglect.** We may disclose your PHI to a state or local agency that is authorized by law to receive reports of child abuse or neglect.
- **Judicial and Administrative Proceedings.** We may disclose your PHI pursuant to a subpoena (with your written consent), court order, administrative order, or similar process.
- **Deceased Patients.** We may disclose PHI regarding deceased patients as mandated by state law, or to a family member or friend that was involved in your care or payment for care prior to death, based on your prior consent. A release of information regarding deceased patients may be limited to an executor or administrator of a deceased person's estate or the person identified as next-of-kin. PHI of persons that have been deceased for more than fifty (50) years is not protected under HIPAA.
- **Medical Emergencies.** We may use or disclose your PHI in a medical emergency situation to medical personnel only in order to prevent serious harm. Our staff will try to provide you a copy of this notice as soon as reasonably practicable after the resolution of the emergency.

- **Family Involvement in Care.** We may disclose information to close family members or friends directly involved in your treatment based on your consent or as necessary to prevent serious harm.
- **Health Oversight.** If required, we may disclose PHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as audits, investigations, and inspections. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies and organizations that provide financial assistance to the program (such as third-party payors based on your prior consent) and peer review organizations performing utilization and quality control.
- **Law Enforcement.** We may disclose PHI to a law enforcement official as required by law, in compliance with a subpoena (with your written consent), court order, administrative order or similar document, for the purpose of identifying a suspect, material witness or missing person, in connections with the victim of a crime, in connection with a deceased person, in connection with the reporting of a crime in an emergency, or in connection with a crime on the premises.
- **Specialized Government Functions.** We may review requests from U.S. military command authorities if you have served as a member of the armed forces, authorized officials for national security and intelligence reasons and to the Department of State for medical suitability determinations, and disclose your PHI based on your written consent, mandatory disclosure laws, and the need to prevent serious harm.
- **Public Health.** If required, we may use or disclose your PHI for mandatory public health activities to a public health authority authorized by law to collect or receive such information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability, or if directed by a public health authority, to a government agency that is collaborating with that public health authority.
- **Public Safety.** We may disclose your PHI if necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public. If information is disclosed to prevent or lessen a serious threat it will be disclosed to a person or persons reasonably able to prevent or lessen the threat, including the target of the threat.
- **Research.** PHI may only be disclosed after a special approval process or with your authorization.
- **Fundraising.** We may send you fundraising communications at one time or another. You have the right to opt out of such fundraising communications with each solicitation you receive.
- **Verbal Permission.** We may also use or disclose your information to family members that are directly involved in your treatment with your verbal permission.

With Authorization. Uses and disclosures not specifically permitted by applicable law will be made only with your written authorization, which may be revoked at any time, except to the extent that we have already made a use or disclosure based upon your authorization. The following uses and disclosures will be made only with your written authorization: (i) most uses and disclosures of psychotherapy notes which are separated from the rest of your medical record; (ii) most uses and disclosures of PHI for marketing purposes, including subsidized treatment communications; (iii) disclosures that constitute a sale of PHI; and (iv) other uses and disclosures not described in this Notice of Privacy Practices.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR PHI.

You have the following rights regarding PHI we maintain about you. To exercise any of these rights, please submit your request in writing to our Privacy Officer, Patricia Mares, at 841 East Main Street Suite B, Chillicothe, OH 45601:

- **Right of Access to Inspect and Copy.** You have the right, which may be restricted only in exceptional circumstances, to inspect and copy PHI that is maintained in a "designated record set." A designated record set contains mental health/medical and billing records and any other

records that are used to make decisions about your care. Your right to inspect or copy PHI will be restricted only in those situations where there is compelling evidence that access would cause serious harm to you or if the information is contained in separately maintained psychotherapy notes. We may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee for copies. If your records are maintained electronically, you may also request an electronic copy of your PHI. You may also request that a copy of your PHI be provided to another person.

- **Right to Amend.** If you feel that the PHI we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information although we are not required to agree to the amendment. If we deny your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us. We may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and will provide you with a copy. Please contact the Privacy Officer if you have any questions.
- **Right to an Accounting of Disclosures.** You have the right to request an accounting of the disclosures that we make of your PHI. We may charge you a reasonable fee if you request more than one accounting in any 12-month period.
- **Right to Request Restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the use or disclosure of your PHI for treatment, payment, or health care operations. We are not required to agree to your request unless the request is to restrict disclosure of PHI to a health plan for purposes of carrying out payment or health care operations, and the PHI pertains to a health care item or service that you paid for out of pocket. In that case, we are required to honor your request for a restriction.
- **Right to Request Confidential Communication.** You have the right to request that we communicate with you about health matters in a certain way or at a certain location. We will accommodate reasonable requests. We may require information regarding how payment will be handled or specification of an alternative address or other method of contact as a condition for accommodating your request. We will not ask you for an explanation of why you are making the request.
- **Breach Notification.** If there is a breach of unsecured PHI, we are required to notify all affected clients by mail or email, including what happened and what you can do to protect yourself, without unreasonable delay and no later than 45 days following the discovery of a breach.
- **Right to a Copy of this Notice.** You have the right to a copy of this notice.

COMPLAINTS. If you believe we have violated your privacy rights, you have the right to file a complaint in writing with our Privacy Officer, Patricia Mares, at 841 East Main Street Suite B, Chillicothe, OH 45601 or with the Secretary of Health and Human Services at 200 Independence Avenue SW, Washington D.C. 20201 or by calling (202) 619-0257. We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

The effective date of this Notice is December 2024.

Client Signature

Date

Client Printed Name

Parent/Guardian Signature (If client is a minor)