

Confidentiality Statement

One of the most important aspects of the relationship between a therapist and a client is that it is a confidential relationship. This means that information about you cannot leave my office without your permission. Should you want me to share information with another professional, I will ask you to sign a form giving me permission to do so. However, as detailed in the Client Information and Informed Consent Form, the law makes some exceptions to this practice.

Exceptions to Confidentiality:

1. As in all states, California has a mandatory child abuse reporting law. This law *requires* me to make a report to the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) whenever I have reason to suspect child abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, or neglect). Your permission for such a report is not required. Similar laws relating to the abuse of elderly and/or disabled individuals are also in force in California, and would require a report to the Department of Adult Protective Services (APS) or Department of Social Services (DSS).
2. If there is clear intention on your part to do serious harm to yourself or to someone else, I will share that information appropriately (as required by law) in an attempt to prevent that harm from occurring.
3. There have been instances in which therapy records have been subpoenaed to court. If this happens, I will not release your records without your direct written permission unless I am ordered to do so by a judge. In this case, I will attempt to give as little information about our sessions to the court as possible.

Please discuss any concerns you have about these exceptions with me, and I will be happy to explain them further.

Confidentiality in Group, Family, and Couples Therapy:

When more than one individual is participating in therapy, the right to confidentiality is shared by all group members. All information shared in the group should remain confidential. However, it is important to understand that I have no real control over material shared by other group or family members.

Confidentiality can become complicated if one person wishes to share information with me that they want kept confidential from the other(s). While every client is entitled to confidentiality, it is also unethical for me to agree to keep a confidence that might be harmful to another. I have found in these situations that it is important for me to reserve the right to use my best judgment as to whether to hold specific information from other therapy participants. If a situation regarding confidentiality arises that concerns you, please talk to me about it.

Confidentiality in Therapy with Minors:

When a person under 18 is in therapy, the right of confidentiality (in most circumstances) extends to the parents or guardians. However, I find that in working with children and adolescents, it is important to respect their right to privacy. Privacy allows for greater trust between the child or adolescent and myself as the therapist, which enhances the effectiveness of the therapy. Privacy allows for a mutually respectful therapy relationship to be established. Therefore, information discussed during the therapy sessions with a child or adolescent will remain private unless the minor becomes a danger to him/herself or others, is a victim of child abuse, or meets any of the criteria discussed above as to the limits of confidentiality. In addition, if the child or adolescent would benefit from more intensive treatment than we have originally agreed upon, some privacy may need to be surrendered to the parent in order to provide for the minor's therapeutic needs. I will use my best clinical judgment in determining what information to share with parents and will only communicate information that will be most helpful to the health and well being of the child or adolescent.

I usually provide parents with general updates and am willing to meet with parents to discuss their child's progress as well as parenting issues or concerns. I find that this kind of collaborative work with parents is very helpful.

Sometimes in child custody disputes, there is a request for the therapist to provide records and/or an opinion to the court. It is generally harmful to children to have information from their therapy released to an attorney in child custody disputes. In addition, it is a conflict of roles for me to function as an expert in offering opinions regarding the best custody arrangements for the child. For these reasons, I will refuse any attempts to obtain such information unless ordered by a court to do so. With releases from both parents, I will share therapy information with professionals performing child custody evaluations, who in turn will report back to the court. In addition, children involved in custody disputes (either past or present) will not be allowed to enter into therapy until a copy of the court custody papers/minute order is reviewed by me to ensure that appropriate consent for treatment is obtained.

My signature indicates that I have read and understand the information above.

Client Signature

Date

Client Signature

Date

Parent Signature (if client is a minor)

Date