

Ubben Counseling LLC

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Office Privacy Policies and Procedures

Confidentiality and privacy are the cornerstones of the mental health professions. Patients have an expectation that their communications with therapists, and their treatment records, will generally be kept confidential and will not be released to others without the written authorization of the patient. One of the purposes of the Notice of Privacy Practices is to inform and educate patients about the fact that there are exceptions to the general rule of confidentiality. Many of these exceptions have existed for years, and many of them are the result of laws and regulations being passed by state legislatures and by the federal government. These laws and regulations are essentially statements of public policy. The office policies and procedures, as well as the ethical standards of the counseling profession, are intended to shape the practice of Ubben Counseling LLC so that privacy and confidentiality are maintained, consistent with Minnesota law and the federal "Privacy Rule."

1. **Privacy Officer:** I, Christine Ubben, MA, LPC, LAMFT am the privacy officer for Ubben Counseling LLC. I am the one responsible for developing and implementing these policies and procedures.
2. **Contact Person:** I, Christine Ubben, MA, LPC, LAMFT am the contact person for this practice. If a patient needs or desires further information related to the Notice of Privacy Practices, or if the patient has a complaint regarding these policies and procedures or our compliance with them, I am the person who should be contacted.
3. The effective date of these policies and procedures is February 1, 2008.
4. I will maintain documentation of all consents, authorizations, Notices of Privacy Practices, Office Policies and Procedures, trainings, and patient requests for records or for amendments to records. I will also document complaints received and their disposition.
5. I will not maintain or use patient sign-in sheets.
6. Conversations regarding confidential material or information will take place in an area and in a manner where they will not be easily overheard.
7. Patient records will be kept in locked file cabinets. My individual office is locked when I am not there. Patient records will not be left in places in my office where others are able to see its contents. I will take steps to assure that patient records are accessed only by me or by those in my employ with my permission, who may need to access them on my behalf or on the patient's behalf.
8. Computers and fax machines will be placed appropriately so that access is limited and so that confidential information transmitted or received is not seen by others.
9. Information and records concerning a patient may be disclosed as described in the Notice of Privacy Practices and in accordance with applicable law or regulation. Generally, I will obtain a written authorization from the patient before releasing information to third parties for purposes other than treatment, payment, and health care operations, unless disclosure is required by law or permitted by law.
10. If mental health records are subpoenaed by an adverse party, I will act according to Court Order or other lawful authority to release records or portions thereof.
11. I keep patient records for at least seven years from the date of last treatment. With respect to the records of a minor, I keep those records for at least seven years or until the patient is twenty-one years old, whichever is longer. Thereafter, I may destroy patient records. When records are destroyed, they will be destroyed in a manner that protects patient privacy and confidentiality.
12. I will attempt to find out from patients, as early as possible, whether they have any objection to me or others in my office sending correspondence to their residence and whether I am permitted to call them at their residence or elsewhere to change appointment times or dates, or to discuss matters related to their treatment.
13. With respect to email or online fax communications, I will do my best to ensure that communications are encrypted and can only be opened by the person to whom they are being sent.