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## **Adolescent/Dependent Informed Consent Privacy of Information Shared in Counseling/Therapy**

**What to Expect:** The purpose of meeting with a counselor is to get help with problems in your life that are bothering you or are keeping you from being successful in important areas of your life. You may be here because you want to talk to a counselor about these things, or you may be here because your parent, guardian, doctor or teacher had concerns about you. When we meet, we will discuss these concerns and I'll ask questions, listen to you and suggest some things that might help with the areas of concern. Sometimes these concerns will include things you don't want your parents or guardians to know about. For most people, knowing that what they say will be kept private helps them feel more comfortable and have more trust in their counselor. Privacy, also called confidentiality, is an important and necessary part of good counseling.

As a general rule, I will keep the information you share with me in our sessions confidential, unless I have your consent to disclose certain information. There are, however, important exceptions to this rule that are important for you to understand before you share personal information with me in a therapy session. In some situations, I am required by law, or by the guidelines of my profession, to disclose information whether or not I have your permission. Below are some of those situations.

### **Confidentiality Cannot Be Maintained When:**

- You tell me you have a plan to cause serious harm or death to yourself and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. I must take steps to inform your parent or guardian of what you have told me and how serious I believe this threat to be. I must make sure that you are protected from harming yourself.
- You tell me you plan to cause serious harm or death to someone else who I can identify and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. In this situation, I must inform your parent or guardian, and I must inform the person you intend to harm.
- You are doing things that could cause serious harm to you or someone else, even if you do not intend to harm yourself or another person. In these situations, I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether I should inform a parent or guardian.
- You tell me you are being abused - physically, sexually, or emotionally - or that you have experienced abuse in the past. In this situation, the law requires me to report abuse to the Tennessee/Kentucky Department of Children's Services.
- You are involved in a court case and a lawyer or the court requests information about your counseling. If this happens, I will not disclose information without your written agreement, unless the court requires me to. I will do all I can within the law to protect your confidentiality, and if I am required to disclose information to the court, I will inform you that this is happening,

### **Communicating with Your Parent or Guardian:**

Except for situations such as those mentioned above, I will not tell your parent or guardian specific things you share with me in our private counseling sessions. This includes activities and behaviors that your parent/guardian may not approve of or might upset them - but that do not put you at risk of serious and immediate harm. However, if your risk-taking behavior becomes more serious, then I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether you are in serious and immediate danger of harm. If I feel that you are in such danger, I will discuss this with you and communicate this information to your parent/guardian if you do not or cannot take action to change the situation where you may experience harm.

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In most situations, I will discuss with you prior to breaking our confidentiality. Even if I have agreed to keep information confidential, I may believe that it is important for them to know what is going on in your life. In these

situations, I will encourage you to tell your parent/guardian and will help you find the best way to tell them. Also when meeting with your parents, I may sometimes describe problems in general terms, without using specifics, in order to help them know how to be more helpful to you.

You should also know that, by Tennessee law, your parent/guardian has the right to see any written records I keep about our sessions. I tend to keep very brief notes to remind myself about those things we discuss, but typically do not include specifics unless they may pertain to your personal harm or the harm of someone else. It is extremely rare that a parent/guardian would ever request to look at these records, but they do have the right to see them.

**With your signature below, you are acknowledging that you have read and understand the privacy information and the limits of confidentiality within our therapeutic relationship.**

Minor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Minor's Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_