

Notice of Privacy Practices

I. 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.

II. MCT HAS A LEGAL DUTY TO SAFEGUARD YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION (PHI).

Mountain Counseling and Training, Inc. (MCT) is legally required to protect the privacy of your PHI, which includes information that can be used to identify you that MCT creates or receives about your past, present, or future health or condition, the provision of health care to you, or the payment of this health care. MCT must provide you with this Notice about our privacy practices, and such Notice must explain how, when, and why MCT will “use” and “disclose” your PHI. A “use” of PHI occurs when MCT shares, examines, utilizes, applies, or analyzes such information within our practice; PHI is “disclosed” when it is released, transferred, has been given to, or is otherwise divulged to a third party outside of MCT. With some exceptions, MCT may not use or disclose any more of your PHI than is necessary to accomplish the purpose for which the use or disclosure is made. And, MCT is legally required to follow the privacy practices described in this Notice.

However, MCT reserves the right to change the terms of this Notice and our privacy policies at any time. Any changes will apply to PHI on file with MCT already. Before MCT makes any important changes to our policies, we will promptly change this Notice and post a new copy of it in our office and on our website (*if applicable*). You can also request a copy of this Notice from staff at MCT, or you can view a copy of it in our office or at our website, which is located at www.MountainCounseling.org.

III. HOW MCT MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR PHI.

MCT will use and disclose your PHI for many different reasons. For some of these uses or disclosures, MCT will need your prior written authorization; for others, however, MCT does not. Listed below are the different categories of our uses and disclosures along with some examples of each category.

A. Uses and Disclosures Relating to Treatment, Payment, or Health Care Operations Do Not Require Your Prior Written Consent. MCT can use and disclose your PHI without your consent for the following reasons:

1. For Treatment. MCT can use your PHI within our practice to provide you with mental health treatment, including discussing or sharing your PHI with trainees, interns, associates, or supervisors. MCT can disclose your PHI to physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and other licensed health care providers who provide you with health care

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services or are involved in your care. For example, if a psychiatrist is treating you, MCT can disclose your PHI to your psychiatrist to coordinate your care.

2. To Obtain Payment for Treatment. MCT can use and disclose your PHI to bill and collect payment for the treatment and services provided by our staff to you. For example, MCT may provide your PHI to business associates, such as billing companies, claims processing companies, and others that process MCT's health care claims.

3. For Health Care Operations. MCT can use and disclose your PHI to operate our practice. For example, MCT might use your PHI to evaluate the quality of health care services that you received or to evaluate the performance of the health care professionals who provided such services to you. We may also provide your PHI to our accountant, attorney, consultants, or others to further MCT's health care operations.

4. Patient Incapacitation or Emergency. MCT may also disclose your PHI to others without your consent if you are incapacitated or if an emergency exists. For example, your consent isn't required if you need emergency treatment, as long as MCT tries to get your consent after treatment is rendered, or if MCT tries to get your consent but you are unable to communicate with me (for example, if you are unconscious or in severe pain) and MCT staff think that you would consent to such treatment if you were able to do so.

B. Certain Other Uses and Disclosures Also Do Not Require Your Consent or Authorization. MCT can use and disclose your PHI without your consent or authorization for the following reasons:

1. When federal, state, or local laws require disclosure. For example, MCT may have to make a disclosure to applicable governmental officials when a law requires us to report information to government agencies and law enforcement personnel about victims of abuse or neglect.

2. When judicial or administrative proceedings require disclosure. For example, if you are involved in a lawsuit or a claim for workers' compensation benefits, MCT may have to use or disclose your PHI in response to a court or administrative order. MCT may also have to use or disclose your PHI in response to a subpoena.

3. When law enforcement requires disclosure. For example, MCT may have to use or disclose your PHI in response to a search warrant.

4. When public health activities require disclosure. For example, MCT may have to use or disclose your PHI to report to a government official an adverse reaction that you have to a medication.

5. When health oversight activities require disclosure. For example, MCT may have to provide information to assist the government in conducting an investigation or inspection of a health care provider or organization.

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6. To avert a serious threat to health or safety. For example, MCT may have to use or disclose your PHI to avert a serious threat to the health or safety of others. However, any such disclosures will only be made to someone able to prevent the threatened harm from occurring.

7. For specialized government functions. If you are in the military, MCT may have to use or disclose your PHI for national security purposes, including protecting the President of the United States or conducting intelligence operations.

8. To remind you about appointments and to inform you of health-related benefits or services. For example, MCT may have to use or disclose your PHI to remind you about your appointments, or to give you information about treatment alternatives, other health care services, or other health care benefits that MCT offers which may be of interest to you.

C. Certain Uses and Disclosures Require You to Have the Opportunity to Object.

1. Disclosures to Family, Friends, or Others. MCT may provide your PHI to a family member, friend, or other person that you indicate is involved in your care or the payment for your health care, unless you object in whole or in part. The opportunity to consent may be obtained retroactively in emergency situations.

D. Other Uses and Disclosures Require Your Prior Written Authorization. In any other situation not described in sections III A, B, and C above, MCT will need your written authorization before using or disclosing any of your PHI. If you choose to sign an authorization to disclose your PHI, you can later revoke such authorization in writing to stop any future uses and disclosures (to the extent that MCT hasn't taken any action in reliance on such authorization) of your PHI by MCT.

IV. WHAT RIGHTS YOU HAVE REGARDING YOUR PHI

You have the following rights with respect to your PHI:

A. The Right to Request Restrictions on MCT's Uses and Disclosures. You have the right to request restrictions or limitations on MCT's uses or disclosures of your PHI to carry out our treatment, payment, or health care operations. You also have the right to request that MCT restrict or limit disclosures of your PHI to family members or friends or others involved in your care or who are financially responsible for your care. Please submit such requests to MCT in writing. MCT will consider your requests, but we are not legally required to accept them. If MCT does accept your requests, we will put them in writing and we will abide by them, except in emergency situations. However, be advised, that you may not limit the uses and disclosures that MCT is legally required to make.

B. The Right to Choose How MCT Sends PHI to You. You have the right to request that MCT sends confidential information to you at an alternate address (for example, sending

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information to your work address rather than your home address) or by alternate means (for example, e-mail instead of regular mail). MCT must agree to your request so long as it is reasonable and you specify how or where you wish to be contacted, and, when appropriate, you provide me with information as to how payment for such alternate communications will be handled. MCT may not require an explanation from you as to the basis of your request as a condition of providing communications on a confidential basis.

C. The Right to Inspect and Copy of Your PHI. In most cases, you have the right to inspect and copy the PHI that MCT has for you, but you must make the request to inspect and copy such information in writing. If MCT doesn't have your PHI but we know who does, we will tell you how to get it. MCT will respond to your request within 30 days of receiving your written request. In certain situations, MCT may deny your request. If we do, we will tell you, in writing, our reasons for the denial and explain your right to have my denial reviewed.

If you request copies of your PHI, MCT will charge you not more than \$.25 for each page. Instead of providing the PHI you requested, we may provide you with a summary or explanation of the PHI as long as you agree to that and to the cost in advance.

D. The Right to Receive a List of the Disclosures MCT Has Made. You have the right to receive a list of instances, i.e., an Accounting of Disclosures, in which MCT has disclosed your PHI. The list will not include disclosures made for MCT's treatment, payment, or health care operations; disclosures made to you; disclosures you authorized; disclosures incident to a use or disclosure permitted or required by the federal privacy rule; disclosures made for national security or intelligence; disclosures made to correctional institutions or law enforcement personnel; or, disclosures made before April 14, 2003.

MCT will respond to your request for an Accounting of Disclosures within 60 days of receiving such request. The list we will give you will include disclosures made in the last six years unless you request a shorter time. The list will include the date the disclosure was made, to whom the PHI was disclosed (including their address, if known), a description of the information disclosed, and the reason for the disclosure. MCT will provide the list to you at no charge, but if you make more than one request in the same year, MCT may charge you a reasonable, cost-based fee for each additional request.

E. The Right to Amend Your PHI. If you believe that there is a mistake in your PHI or that a piece of important information is missing, you have the right to request that MCT correct the existing information or add the missing information. You must provide the request and your reason for the request in writing. MCT will respond within 60 days of receiving your request to correct or update your PHI. MCT may deny your request in writing if the PHI is (i) correct and complete, (ii) not created by MCT, (iii) not allowed to be disclosed, or (iv) not part of MCT records. MCT's written denial will state the reasons for the denial and explain your right to file a written statement of disagreement with the denial.

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If you don't file one, you have the right to request that your request and MCT's denial be attached to all future disclosures of your PHI. If MCT approves your request, we will make the change to your PHI, tell you that we have done it, and tell others that need to know about the change to your PHI.

F. The Right to Receive a Paper Copy of this Notice. You have the right to receive a paper copy of this notice even if you have agreed to receive it via e-mail.

V. HOW TO COMPLAIN ABOUT OUR PRIVACY PRACTICES

If you think that MCT may have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we made about access to your PHI, you may file a complaint with the person listed in Section VI below. You also may send a written complaint to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services at 200 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201. MCT will take no retaliatory action against you if you file a complaint about our privacy practices.

VI. PERSON TO CONTACT FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THIS NOTICE OR TO COMPLAIN ABOUT MY PRIVACY PRACTICES

If you have any questions about this notice or any complaints about MCT's privacy practices, or would like to know how to file a complaint with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, please contact me at: Angela Harrington (CEO of Mountain Counseling & Training, Inc.), 340 Highway 138, Crestline, California 92325-6300, CEO@MountainCounseling.org.

VII. EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS NOTICE

This notice went into effect on April 1, 2022.