



**Bright Path**

**Counseling Center**

*Professional • Heartfelt • Confidential*

*"Bright Path is the Right Path"*

## **HIPAA POLICY**

We at **Bright Path Counseling Center** are committed to safeguarding your **personal health information** (PHI). PHI is any information that can identify you as an individual **and** your past, present, or future medical and/or mental health condition.

This notice, in addition to telling you about the ways that we may use and disclose your medical information, also describes your rights, and the obligations that we have regarding the use and disclosure of medical information. Federal and state law require us to:

- 1) Make sure your PHI is kept private;
- 2) Give you notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your PHI; and
- 3) Follow the terms of the notice that is currently in effect.

Therefore, we will release your PHI only under the following circumstances:

- 1) When you give us written consent to do so.
- 2) When we are required by a specific court order to do so.

We will make changes in our privacy policy only as required by law. We will notify you in advance of those changes, in writing.

### **Privacy Compliance Officer:**

The privacy compliance officer at **Bright Path** is **Debra**. Please address all complaints and/or requests for amendments to your PHI, and/or requests for copies of your PHI, to Debra.

### **Nonpublic Personal Information:**

Nonpublic Personal Information is the information you give your insurance company when you sign up for benefits, such as name, address, Social Security number, date of birth, etc. We will only provide that information to your insurance company (or companies) in order to verify benefits and obtain payment for services rendered. We will not disclose that information to any other entity unless 1) required to do so by court order; or 2) you give us written consent to do so.

### **Psychotherapy notes:**

Psychotherapy notes have special protection under the new HIPAA regulations:

- 1) They can only be released under a court order that shows the necessity of their release.
- 2) Barring a court order, they can only be released **when the therapist determines the release to be in your best interest.**
- 3) Psychotherapy notes will never be released without your consent, but they may not be released to an entity you authorize, if your therapist deems it to be detrimental to your treatment.
- 4) Your insurance company may no longer pre-condition payment of benefits on the release of psychotherapy notes.

Please note the following restrictions, and please do not ask us to violate them:

- 1) We cannot acknowledge your presence and/or treatment at Bright Path Counseling Center without your written consent, or a court order. We cannot do so for family members, friends, employers, lawyers, government agencies, etc. If you want any of the above to act on your behalf, including the setting or changing of appointments, you must sign a written authorization.

- 2) We cannot complete any paperwork for any local, state or federal agency, for any purpose, without your consent. We cannot provide any PHI to any insurance agency other than the one(s) reimbursing us for authorized care without your specific written authorization.

**Individual Rights:**

- 1) You have the right to inspect and/or copy your PHI, when your therapist determines that such an inspection and/or copying would not be detrimental to your physical health or personal safety, and would not cause harm to another individual. **This right does not extend to psychotherapy notes, as noted above.**
- 2) You have a right, under law, to request an accounting of the instances in which we disclosed your PHI, other than disclosures made for the purpose of treatment, payment, and disclosures made with your authorization. However, at **Bright Path Counseling Center**, we do not make any disclosures outside of those parameters.
- 3) You have the right to request additional restrictions on our use and disclosure of your PHI. However, the law will not permit us to honor those additional restrictions if they keep us from receiving payment for services rendered.

**Amendment:**

You have the right to request that we amend your PHI. Your request must be in writing, and it must explain why the information should be amended. We will deny your request if we did not create the information you want amended, or if we determine the current information is accurate. If we accept your request, we will make a reasonable effort to notify others, including people or organizations you name in your written request, and will include the changes in all future disclosures of your PHI. If we deny your request, we will provide a written explanation. You may then respond with a written statement of disagreement that will be attached to the information you want amended. You may contact Bonnie Merkel for a form to complete and return to us.

**Safeguards:**

We employ the following safeguards to insure the privacy of your PHI:

- All of our employees sign an agreement to follow our Confidentiality guidelines.
- All of our employees complete privacy training.
- We have implemented sanctions for the violation of privacy practices, up to and including loss of employment.
- We have a privacy coordinator who detects and prevents security breaches.
- All computer systems that contain personal information have security protection.
- All physical files are kept in a double-locked storage container.
- All of our therapy offices conform to state and federal privacy regulations with regards to construction and use.

**Questions and Complaints:**

If you want more information about our privacy practices, or feel that your privacy rights have been violated, please contact our privacy officer. You may also submit a written complaint to the Department of Health and Human Services. We will provide you with the address to file your complaint with HHS upon request.

Please contact: Debra @ Bright Path Counseling Center  
7266 Buckley Road  
North Syracuse NY 13212  
Phone: 315-458-0919 Fax: 315-458-0954