



Social Work Support

Building On Your Strengths. Supporting You Through Challenges.

PRIVACY POLICY

I am committed to respecting and protecting your privacy. This statement outlines my policies and procedures with respect to collecting, using, and disclosing your personal health information. It also provides information about how you can access records of your personal health information and request correction of recorded information.

Definition of “Personal Health Information”

The practice of social worker in Ontario is regulated under the provincial Regulated Health Professions Act. As such, all identifiable information collected by a social worker about an individual, in the course of practicing, is considered “personal health information” under the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (PHIPA). This includes your name and contact information, as well as any information collected/recorded in the course of providing services to you.

Collection of Your Personal Health Information

I collect your personal health information only directly from your child or yourself as the guardian of the child, except: a) when you have provided consent to obtain such information from others (e.g., reports of previous assessments or of other services); and b) where the law requires or allows me to collect information without your consent (e.g., in an urgent situation, when information is needed to prevent potential harm).

I collect only information from you that I believe is needed: a) to provide you with the services you have requested and/or for which you have been referred; b) to maintain contact with you for service-related or future consent purposes; c) to prevent or offset harm (i.g., asking for an emergency contact). If I collect information from you for any other purpose (e.g., research), it will be done only with your informed consent. If you decide that you do not want to provide this latter type of information, you are completely free to refuse. There will be no impact on your services.

By law and in accordance with professional standards, I am required to keep a record of services provided to and contacts with you. Your record includes information you provide or authorize me to receive, results of any assessments, your service plan, consent forms, progress notes, billing information, and correspondence that I have sent or received related to your service. The physical records are the property of Tricia Porter. That said, you have rights regarding access to your record and regarding disclose of information from your record (see below), regardless of the form in which the information is recorded.

Use of Your Personal Health Information

The primary use of your personal health information is to provide services to you. This includes carrying out all of the functions reasonably necessary to provide those services (e.g., service planning, and monitoring, maintaining your record, billing, etc.).

Paper information and electronic hardware are either under supervision or secured in restricted area at all times. In addition, passwords are used on computers, which are kept in secure places.

Disclosure of Your Personal Health Information

With only a few exceptions, your personal health information will not be disclosed to persons outside this office without your knowledge and expressed consent. The exceptions are circumstances in which disclosure is allowed by law:

- a. When there is a clear and imminent risk of serious bodily harm to someone, including the possibility of self-harm.
- b. When disclosure is needed to receive professional or legal consultation.
- c. For mandatory reporting of a child who might be in need of protection.
- d. For mandatory reporting of a regulated health professional who has sexually abused a client.
- e. In compliance with a court order to release information from a record.
- f. To comply with professional regulations established by the Ontario College of Social Workers, who may inspect records and interview members as part of their regulatory activities (e.g., quality assurance) in the public interest.
- g. To comply with the regulatory authorities under the terms of the Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA) for the purposes of the Ontario College of Social Workers for fulfilling their respective mandates under the RHPA, as well as for a defense of a legal issue.

All persons involved in these activities are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of any accessed information. The above exceptions are called “limits of confidentiality”. If there are other limits of confidentiality in your situation, I will identify and discuss them with you before proceeding with your service.

Please note that the law requires any disclosure of your personal health information to be limited to information that is reasonably necessary for the purpose of the disclosure, and not to include private information provided by a third party, unless you are involved in an open mediation or custody/access assessment. Professional ethical standards additionally require that any information that might cause serious harm to someone not be disclosed, unless the law requires disclosure.

When consenting to the disclosure of your personal health information to another health professional, you may restrict me from sharing all or any part of your personal information. However, if in my opinion the information is reasonably necessary for another health service provider to provide appropriate service, I am required by law to inform the other provider that you have refused consent to provide some needed information.

Retention and Destruction of Personal Information

I am required by legislation and my regulatory body to retain personal information for 7 years starting at the end of treatment, and for cases involving sexual abuse, cases are held indefinitely.

Your Right of Access to Your Personal Health Information Record

With only a few exceptions, you have the right to access any record of your personal health information, and to request copies of the information. If the physical record contains personal health information about another individual, that individual’s information must be able to be severed from the record before you may access the record. Because of the nature of certain services, severing information in some, not all places of the record can be difficult and at times impossible.

Other exceptions include access to information provided in confidence by a third party, and information that could result in serious harm to someone’s treatment to recovery, or in serious bodily harm to someone.

If you are the custodial parent or guardian of a child receiving service, you may not access (without the child's consent) the personal health information of a child, who was deemed competent and who consented to the service on his/her own. In addition, there are restrictions on custodial parents/guardians access to individual therapy notes regarding their children.

If you request your personal file:

- I may need to confirm your identity, if you have not received service for some time, before providing you with this access.
- I reserve the right to charge a nominal fee for such requests, including the cost of retrieving your file from storage and separating out your information from those of other affected parties.
- If I cannot give you access, I will tell you within 14 days and explain why not.
- If you believe there is a mistake in the information, you have the right to ask for it to be corrected. This applies to factual information and not to any professional opinions I may have formed. I may ask you to provide documentation that our files are inaccurate.
- Where we agree there is an error, I will make the correction and notify anyone to whom I have sent the incorrect information. If we do not agree that I have made an error, you may provide a notice of disagreement that will be included in the file and I will forward that notice to anyone else who received the earlier information.

Concerns and Further Information

If you would like more detailed information at any time, would like to access or ask for a correction of your record, have concern about my privacy policies and procedures, or have a concern about the way your privacy has been handled, please do not hesitate to speak or write to me.

This privacy policy has been developed in accordance with the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (PHIPA) and professional regulations and ethical standards. PHIPA is a complex Act and provides some additional exceptions to the information protection and privacy principles that are too detailed to set out here.

Further details of the applicable laws, regulations, and standards may be found at the Websites of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (www.health.gov.on.ca) and the Personal Health Information Protection Act (www.ipc.on.ca).

For more general inquiries, the information and the Privacy Commissioner of Ontario oversees the administration of the privacy legislation in the private sector. The Commissioner can be reached at:

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Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2V1
Phone (416) 326-3333
E-mail: commissioner@ipc.on.ca