



Loretta Staples LCSW

Therapist

Notice of Privacy Practices

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.

Your health record contains personal information about you and your health. This information about you—that may identify you, and that relates to your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition and related health care services—is referred to as Protected Health Information (“PHI”). This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how I may use and disclose your PHI in accordance with applicable law and the NASW Code of Ethics. It also describes your rights regarding how you may gain access to and control your PHI.

What I mean by your medical information

Each time you visit me or any doctor’s office, hospital, clinic, or other health care provider, information is collected about you and your physical and mental health. It may be information about your past, present, or future health or conditions, or the tests and treatment you got from me or from others, or about payment for health care. The information I collect from you is called “**PHI**,” which stands for “**protected health information**.” This information goes into your **medical or health care records** in my office.

In this office, your PHI is likely to include these kinds of information:

- Your history: Childhood experiences; school and work experiences; relationships and other personal history.
- Reasons you came for treatment: Your problems, complaints, symptoms, or needs.
- Diagnoses: The medical terms for your problems or symptoms.
- A treatment plan: The list of treatment goals and methods we undertake.
- Progress notes: The session notes I write describing how you are doing, what I notice about you, and what you tell me.
- Records I get from others who treated you or evaluated you.
- Psychological test scores, school records, and other reports.
- Information about medications you took or are taking.
- Legal matters.
- Billing and insurance information.

There may also be other kinds of information that go into your health care records here.

I use PHI for many purposes. For example, I may use it:

- To plan your care and treatment.
- To decide how well our treatments are working for you.
- When I talk with other health care professionals who are also treating you, such as your family doctor or the professional who referred you to me.
- To show that you actually received services from me, which I billed to you or to your health insurance company.
- For teaching and training other health care professionals.
- For medical or psychological research.
- For public health officials trying to improve health care in this area of the country.
- To improve the way I do my job by measuring the results of our work.

When you understand what is in your record and what it is used for, you can make better decisions about who, when, and why others should have this information.

Privacy and the laws about privacy

I am required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with notice of my legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI. I am required to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices. I reserve the right to change the terms of my Notice of Privacy Practices at any time. Any new Notice of Privacy Practices will be effective for all PHI that I maintain at that time. I will provide you with a copy of the revised Notice of Privacy Practices by posting a copy on my website (lcsw.lorettastaples.com) and in my office, or by sending a copy to you in the mail upon request.

How I may use and disclose health information about you

When an individual inside this office reads your information, this is called, in the law, “use.” If the information is shared with or sent to others outside the office, that is called, in the law, “disclosure.” Except in some special circumstances, when I use or disclose your PHI, I share only the **minimum necessary** PHI required for the task at hand. Mainly, I will use and disclose your PHI for routine purposes to provide for your care. Some uses require your consent. Others do not. These are described below.

Uses and disclosures that require your consent

After you read this notice, I will ask you to sign a separate **consent form** to allow me to use and share your PHI. I cannot treat you without this consent. With verbal permission, I may also use or disclose your information to family members who are directly involved in your treatment. In almost all cases, I intend to use your PHI here or share it with other people or organizations to provide treatment to you, arrange for payment for my services, or for some other business functions called “health care operations.” Together, these routine purposes are called TPO (Treatment, Payment, Operations), and the consent form allows me to use and disclose your PHI for TPO:

Treatment

Your PHI may be used and disclosed by those who are involved in your care for the purpose of providing, coordinating, or managing your health care treatment and related services. This includes consultation with clinical supervisors, or other treatment team members. I may disclose PHI to any other consultant only with your authorization. I may also contact you to remind you of your appointments or to provide information to you about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

Payment

I may use and disclose PHI so that I can receive payment for the treatment services provided to you. This will only be done with your authorization. Examples of payment-related activities are: making a determination of eligibility or coverage for insurance benefits, processing claims with your insurance company, reviewing services provided to you to determine medical necessity, or undertaking utilization review activities. If it becomes necessary to use collection processes due to lack of payment for services, I will only disclose the minimum amount of PHI necessary for purposes of collection.

Health Care Operations

I may use or disclose, as needed, your PHI in order to support our business activities including, but not limited to, quality assessment activities, licensing, and conducting or arranging for other business activities. For example, I may share your PHI with third parties that perform various business activities (e.g., billing or typing services) provided I have a written contract with the business that requires it to safeguard the privacy of your PHI. For training or teaching purposes PHI will be disclosed only with your authorization.

Uses and disclosures that don't require your consent or authorization

Following is a list of the categories of uses and disclosures permitted by HIPAA without an authorization. Applicable law and ethical standards permit me to disclose information about you without your authorization only in a limited number of situations. As a social worker licensed in this state and as a member of the National Association of Social Workers, it is my practice to adhere to more stringent privacy requirements for disclosures without an authorization. The following language addresses these categories to the extent consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics and HIPAA.

Abuse or Neglect of a Child, Elderly Person, or Person with Cognitive Disabilities

I am mandated by the state of Connecticut to report instances of suspected abuse or neglect of a child, elderly person, or person with cognitive disabilities. I may disclose your PHI to a state or local agency authorized by law to receive reports of such abuse or neglect.

Judicial and Administrative Proceedings

I may disclose your PHI pursuant to a subpoena (with your written consent), court order, administrative order or similar process.

Deceased Patients

I may disclose PHI regarding deceased patients as mandated by state law. A release of information regarding deceased patients may be limited to an executor or administrator of a deceased person's estate.

Medical Emergencies

I may use or disclose your protected health information in a medical emergency situation to medical personnel only in

order to prevent serious harm. I will try to provide you a copy of this notice as soon as reasonably practicable after the resolution of the emergency.

Family Involvement in Care

I may disclose information to close family members or friends directly involved in your treatment based on your consent or as necessary to prevent serious harm.

Health Oversight

If required, I may disclose PHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as audits, investigations, and inspections. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies and organizations that provide financial assistance to the program (such as third-party payors based on your prior consent) and peer review organizations performing utilization and quality control.

Law Enforcement

I may disclose PHI to a law enforcement official as required by law, in compliance with a subpoena (with your written consent), court order, administrative order or similar document, for the purpose of identifying a suspect, material witness or missing person, in connection with the victim of a crime, in connection with a deceased person, in connection with the reporting of a crime in an emergency, or in connection with a crime on the premises.

Specialized Government Functions

I may review requests from U.S. military command authorities if you have served as a member of the armed forces, authorized officials for national security and intelligence reasons and to the Department of State for medical suitability determinations, and disclose your PHI based on your written consent, mandatory disclosure laws and the need to prevent serious harm.

Public Health

If required, I may use or disclose your PHI for mandatory public health activities to a public health authority authorized by law to collect or receive such information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability, or if directed by a public health authority, to a government agency that is collaborating with that public health authority.

Public Safety

I may disclose your PHI if necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public. If information is disclosed to prevent or lessen a serious threat it will be disclosed to a person or persons reasonably able to prevent or lessen the threat, including the target of the threat.

Required by Law

I must make disclosures to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services for the purpose of investigating or determining my compliance with the requirements of the Privacy Rule.

Your rights concerning your PHI

You have the following rights regarding PHI I maintain about you. To exercise any of these rights, please submit your request in writing to me, Loretta Staples LCSW, Privacy Officer, 400 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

Right of Access to Inspect and Copy

You have the right, which may be restricted only in exceptional circumstances, to inspect and copy PHI that is maintained in a "designated record set". A designated record set contains mental health/medical and billing records and any other records that are used to make decisions about your care. Your right to inspect and copy PHI will be restricted only in those situations where there is compelling evidence that access would cause serious harm to you. I may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee for copies. If your records are maintained electronically, you may also request an electronic copy of your PHI.

Right to Amend

If you feel that the PHI I have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask me to amend the information although I am not required to agree to the amendment. If I deny your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with me. I may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and will provide you with a copy. Please contact the Privacy Officer if you have any questions.

Right to an Accounting of Disclosures

You have the right to request an accounting of certain of the disclosures I make of your PHI. I may charge you a reasonable fee if you request more than one accounting in any 12-month period.

Right to Request Restrictions

You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the use or disclosure of your PHI for treatment, payment, or health care operations. I am not required to agree to your request unless the request is to restrict disclosure of PHI to a health plan for purposes of carrying out payment or health care operations, and the PHI pertains to a health care item or service that you paid for out of pocket. In that case, I am required to honor your request for a restriction.

Right to Request Confidential Communication

You have the right to request that I communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location.

Breach Notification

If there is a breach of unsecured protected health information concerning you, I may be required to notify you of this breach, including what happened and what you can do to protect yourself.

Right to a Copy of this Notice

You have the right to a copy of this notice.

If you have questions or problems

If you have questions about the privacy practices described above, please speak to me. If you have a problem with how your PHI has been handled, or if you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you have the right to file a complaint in writing with me and with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201 or by calling (202) 619-0257. I will not limit your care here or take any actions against you for filing a complaint.

The effective date of this notice is August 1, 2011.