

# Kara Lucas Counseling

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## Texas Notice Form (HIPAA)

### Notice of Psychotherapists' Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

#### **I. Uses and Disclosures for Treatment, Payment, and Health Care Operations**

The psychotherapists at Kara Lucas Counseling, PLLC may use or disclose your Protected Health Information (PHI), for treatment, payment, and health care operations purposes with your consent. To help clarify these terms, here are some definitions:

- “PHI” refers to information in your health record that could identify you.
- “Treatment, Payment and Health Care Operations”
  - Treatment is when we provide, coordinate or manage your health care and other services related to your health care. For example, with your written authorization we may consult with another health care provider, such as your family physician or another psychotherapist.
  - Payment is when we obtain reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are when we disclose your PHI to your health insurer to obtain reimbursement for your health care or to determine eligibility or coverage.
  - Health Care Operations are activities that relate to the performance and operation of the practice. Examples of health care operations are quality assessment and improvement activities, business-related matters such as audits and administrative services, and case management and care coordination.
- “Use” applies only to activities within this practice, such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.
- “Disclosure” applies to activities outside of this practice, such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

#### **II. Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization**

We may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and health care operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. An “authorization” is written permission above and beyond the general consent that permits only specific disclosures. In those instances when we are asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment and health care operations, we will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this

information.

We will also obtain an authorization from you before using or disclosing (1) PHI in a way that is not described in this Notice, and (2) Psychotherapy notes.

“Psychotherapy notes” are notes we have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which we have kept separate from the rest of your medical record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI.

You may revoke all such authorizations (of PHI or psychotherapy notes) at any time, provided each revocation is in writing. You may not revoke an authorization to the extent that (1) we have relied on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage, and the law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

### **III. Uses and Disclosures with Neither Consent nor Authorization**

We may use or disclose PHI without your consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

- **Child Abuse:** If we have cause to believe that a child has been, or may be, abused, neglected, or sexually abused, we must make a report of such within 48 hours to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, the Texas Youth Commission, or to any local or state law enforcement agency.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If we have cause to believe that an elderly or disabled person is in a state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, we must immediately report such to the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.
- **Health Oversight Activities:** If a complaint is filed against any of our therapists with the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychotherapists, they have the authority to subpoena confidential mental health information from us relevant to that complaint.
- **Judicial or Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your diagnosis and treatment and the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and we will not release information, without written authorization from you or your personal or legally appointed representative, or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** If we determine that there is a probability of imminent physical injury by you to yourself or others, or there is a probability of immediate mental or emotional injury to you, we may disclose relevant confidential mental health information to medical or law enforcement personnel.
- **Worker’s Compensation:** If you file a worker's compensation claim, we may disclose records relating to your diagnosis and treatment to your employer’s insurance carrier.
- **When the use and disclosure without your consent or authorization is allowed under other sections of Section 164.512 of the Privacy Rule and the state’s confidentiality law.** This includes certain narrowly-defined disclosures to law enforcement agencies, to a health oversight agency (such as HHS or a state department of health), to a coroner or medical

examiner, for public health purposes relating to disease or FDA-regulated products, or for specialized government functions such as fitness for military duties, eligibility for VA benefits, and national security and intelligence.

#### **IV. Patient's Rights and Psychotherapist's Duties**

##### Patient's Rights:

- *Right to Request Restrictions* – You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information about you. However, we are not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- *Right to Receive Confidential Communications by Alternative Means and at Alternative Locations* – You have the right to request and receive confidential communications of PHI by alternative means and at alternative locations. (For example, you may not want a family member to know that you are seeing a psychotherapist at Southern Beacon Therapy, PLLC. Upon your written request, we will send your bills to another address).
- *Right to Inspect and Copy* – You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of PHI and psychotherapy notes in our mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in our records. We may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process.  
Section  
611.008 of the Texas Health and Safety Code allows for up to 15 days for our office to copy, print or otherwise make the requested information available to you.
- *Right to Amend* – You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. We may deny your request. On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the amendment process.
- *Right to an Accounting* – You generally have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of PHI for which you have neither provided consent nor authorization (as described in Section III of this Notice). On your request, we will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.
- *Right to a Paper Copy* – You have the right to obtain a paper copy of the notice from us upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.
- *Right to Restrict Disclosures When You Have Paid for Your Care Out-of-Pocket* - You have the right to restrict certain disclosures of PHI to a health plan when you pay out-of-pocket in full for our services.
- *Right to Be Notified if There is a Breach of Your Unsecured PHI* - You have a right to be notified if: (a) there is a breach (defined as a use or disclosure of your PHI in violation of the HIPAA Privacy Rule) involving your PHI; (b) that PHI has not been encrypted to government standards; and (c) our risk assessment fails to determine that there is a low probability that your PHI has been compromised.

##### Psychotherapist's Duties:

- We are required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of its legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- We reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice.

Unless we notify you of such changes, however, we are required to abide by the terms currently in effect.

- If we revise our policies and procedures, we will notify you at your next session, post the revised documents in our office and on our website, and provide you with a copy upon request.

## **V. Questions and Complaints**

If you have questions about this notice, disagree with a decision made about access to your records, or have other concerns about your privacy rights, you may contact the psychotherapist whom you are seeing in this practice. Your psychotherapist is available to discuss these matters with you and will assist you in resolving them.

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated by a psychotherapist at Southern Beacon Therapy, PLLC you may file a complaint with the Privacy Officer at this practice or with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (we can provide you with the appropriate address upon request). All complaints must be submitted in writing.

You have specific rights under the Privacy Rule. We will not retaliate against you for exercising your right to file a complaint.

## **VI. Effective Date, Restrictions, and Changes to Privacy Policy**

This notice will go into effect on the first day of services, and remains in effect until replaced. We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that we maintain.