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Social Media Policy

This document outlines Westfield Mental Health Specialists' (WMHS) policies related to use of Social Media. Please read it to understand how we conduct ourselves on the Internet as mental health professionals and how you can expect us to respond to various interactions that may occur between us on the Internet.

If you have any questions about anything within this document, we encourage you to discuss them with your mental health care provider. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when we need to update this policy. If we do so, we will notify you in writing of any policy changes and make sure you have a copy of the updated policy.

Friending

WMHS providers do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). We believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up when you meet with your mental health care provider.

Interacting

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact your WMHS provider. These sites are not secure and we may not read these messages in a timely fashion. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with us in public online if we have an already established client/therapist relationship. Engaging with your WMHS provider this way could compromise your confidentiality. It may also create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your legal medical record and will need to be documented and archived in your chart. If you need to contact your WMHS provider between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone. Direct email is second best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

Email

WMHS providers prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not email your WMHS provider content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with your WMHS provider by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and WMHS' Internet service providers. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of the Internet service provider. You should also know that any emails WMHS receives from you and any responses WMHS sends to you becomes a part of your legal record.

Business Review Sites

You may find the WMHS practice or individual WMHS provider profiles on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Yahoo Local, Bing, or other places that list businesses. Some of these sites include forums in which users rate their providers and add reviews. Many of these sites comb search engines for business listings and automatically add listings regardless of whether the business has added itself to the site. If you should find the WMHS practice or an individual WMHS provider profile(s) on any of these sites, please know that the listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as our client.

Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, WMHS providers cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with WMHS providers regarding your feelings about WMHS services, there is a good possibility that we may never see it. We hope that you will bring your feelings and reactions directly into the therapy process. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide we are not a good fit.

None of this is meant to keep you from sharing the fact that you receive WMHS services wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that WMHS providers cannot tell people that you are a WMHS client and our Ethics Codes prohibit the solicitation of testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that you are a WMHS client and how you feel about the treatment we have provided to you, in any forum of your choosing.

If you do choose to write something on a business review site, we hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. We urge you to create a pseudonym that is not linked to your regular email address or friend networks for your own privacy and protection.

If you feel that a WMHS provider has done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with him or her, you can always contact the New Jersey State Board of Medical Examiners and/or the New Jersey Board of Psychological Examiners. These Boards oversee licensing and they will review the services you received from your WMHS provider.

Psychiatric Services:

New Jersey State Board of Medical Examiners
P.O. Box 183, Trenton, NJ 08625
609-826-7100

Psychological Services:

New Jersey State Board of Psychological Examiners
P.O. Box 45017, Newark, NJ 07101
973-504-6470

Use of Search Engines

It is NOT a regular part of WMHS providers' practice to search for clients on Google or Facebook or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions *may* be made during times of crisis. If your WMHS provider has a reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in contact via usual means (coming to appointments, phone, or email) there *might* be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if your WMHS provider ever resorts to such means, he or she will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

Location-Based Services

If you use location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. WMHS does not place its practice as a check-in location on various sites such as Foursquare, Gowalla, Loopt, etc. However, if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise that you are a therapy client due to regular check-ins at the WMHS office on a weekly

basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in,” from the WMHS office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review WMHS’ Social Media Policy. If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, please bring them to the attention of you WMHS provider for further discussion.

Your signature in the appropriate location indicates that you have read WMHS’ Social Media Policy and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

Patient Signature
(ages 14 and older)

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature
(if applicable)

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature
(if applicable)

Date

WMHS Provider Signature

Date

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