

Treatment of Children and Adolescents

Privacy Issues for Minors

Therapy is most effective when a trusting relationship exists between the therapist and your child. Privacy is especially important in earning and keeping that trust. As a result, it is important for children to have some privacy where they feel free to discuss personal matters without fear that their thoughts and feelings will be immediately communicated to their parents. This is particularly true for adolescents who are naturally developing a greater sense of independence and autonomy.

It is our policy to provide you with general information about your child's treatment, but not to share specific information your child has disclosed without your child's agreement. This includes activities and behavior that you would not approve of — or might be upset by — but that do not put your child at risk of serious and immediate harm. However, if your child's risk-taking behavior becomes more serious, then the therapist will use professional judgment to decide whether your child is in serious or immediate danger of harm. If your therapist feels that your child is in such danger, this information will be given to you. The therapist will encourage your child to tell you, and help your child find the best way to do so, often during a session together. (You can also always give your child's therapist a scenario, and ask if that issue would be disclosed should it occur.)

General Requests for Treatment Records

Although Indiana law may give parents the right to see written notes we keep about your child's treatment, we request that you allow your child or teen some privacy in their meetings with the therapist. We ask that you not request your child's written treatment records for yourself or for an attorney. We may opt to discontinue treatment if you do, as children frequently decline to disclose any further information in sessions once they know that their parent will be reading the notes. We encourage you instead to schedule parent update sessions with your child's therapist to discuss any concerns or to receive progress reports.

Custody/Parenting Time Litigation

When a family is in conflict, particularly conflict due to parental separation or divorce, our responsibility to your child may require helping to address conflicts that impact your child. However, the therapist's role will be strictly limited to providing treatment to your child.

- Therapists at Spencer Psychology are not in the role of custody evaluator, and ethically cannot give opinions about either parent's custody, visitation suitability, or fitness, as the therapist has not evaluated these issues. We request that neither parent seek to subpoena the treatment records or ask the therapist to testify in court, whether in person or by affidavit, or ask the therapist to provide letters or documentation expressing an opinion about parental fitness or custody/visitation arrangements.
- Please note that your agreement may not prevent a judge from requiring the records or testimony.
- If the court appoints a custody evaluator, guardian ad litem (GAL), or parenting coordinator, we will provide information about treatment as needed to that person, if appropriate releases are signed or a court order is provided.
- If you are already involved in a custody or parenting time case at the time of intake, we are not able to proceed with treatment for your child. We are happy to begin treatment once the court issues have been resolved.
- If your child is already in treatment when divorce proceedings or custody issues occur, we will continue to see the child. However, if you or your child's other parent cannot agree on treatment, or require significant case management or court appearances from the therapist to deal with the divorce, custody or parenting time issues, we may need to refer your child out to a specialist in high conflict cases.

Payment

- Payment is expected in full at the time of service.
- If you will not be present for your child's session, the child will need to bring payment.
- Alternately, we have a credit card vault program, and can hold your card number encrypted in the vault. We can pull down the payment when your child comes for the appointment. (Staff does not have access to the number). We will use the vaulted card for any fees incurred, including no shows/late cancels.
- If you use an HSA card, please be sure there are enough funds in your account to cover the services you/your child schedules each time.
- If you have placed a card in the vault and wish to stop using it to pay for services, you must call and tell us yourself, or send the instructions to us directly in writing (email, fax, text or letter). Please do not rely on your college student or child to tell us you have discontinued authorization of the card.
- We are not able to divide payments between parents for a child. If you wish to share payment between parents, this will need to be worked out between the parents outside

of our practice.

- If a parent is not present with the child, or the child is doing telehealth, payment will be owed by whichever parent signed as the “responsible party” during enrollment. This will include any no show or late cancellation fees for scheduled sessions that may be incurred when the child is with the other parent. Sessions can be spaced out to match parenting time schedules to avoid payment conflicts if requested.

Date of Publication: 8/9/2022