

# 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 and immediate danger of harm. If your therapist feels that your child is in such danger, this information will be given to you.

You can always ask your therapist about specific examples of information that would be disclosed as well. There may also be times where the therapist believes it is in the best interest of the child to inform you of a particular situation. The therapist will encourage your child to tell you, and help your child find the best way to do so

## 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.

## Custody/Parenting Time Litigation Requests for Treatment Records

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 adlitem (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.

### Payments

- Payment is expected 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).
- Parents often give adolescents a Health Savings Card for the vault. Please note that no shows and late cancelation fees are not considered eligible by the IRS for HSA accounts. If you are audited and have used an HSA card for no shows/cancelations, you can be required to pay back these fees to the IRS. (Completed therapy sessions are medically approved expenses and HSA accounts can be used for regular services).
- We can also take a retainer for a few sessions at a time. You can make a retainer payment on our website online at [www.spencerpsychology.com](http://www.spencerpsychology.com) ("make a payment" page).
- We will not be able to reschedule your child unless one of these methods is used.
- If you are sharing custody and wish to share payment between parents, this will need to be worked out between the parents prior to arrival (i.e. we will still collect payment at the time of service, and cannot bill the other parent unless there is a credit card in the vault for this purpose).

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