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Privacy Policy

For the handling of personal information

This document outlines Rural Psych's privacy policy for the management of your personal information. The psychological service provided is bound by the legal requirements of the Australian Privacy Principles set out in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and the Information Privacy Act 2009 and the Queensland Privacy Principles (QPPs).

Personal Information

Your information is stored securely and accessed only by your psychologist and the authorised staff or providers of the practice, as required, in accordance with the practice's policies and procedures.

Your information is stored using our clinic's software Galaxy and in Microsoft OneDrive, which requires two-factor identification to access.

The information collected includes your personal details, such as your name, address, and contact phone numbers. As part of providing a psychological service, such as a psychological assessment or treatment, we will also need to collect and record other personal information that is relevant to your current situation. This includes keeping a record of what happens during sessions, any psychological tests you complete, and any information received from others, such as your GP, lawyer or insurance company.



How Your Personal Information Is Collected

There are a number of ways your personal information is collected, including when:

- You provide information directly to your psychologist in your session and in writing, such as letters, emails or text messages.
- You interact directly with Rural Psych employees, such as our administration staff.
- Other health practitioners, such as your GP, provide personal information to Rural Psych through referrals, correspondence and medical reports.
- We receive personal information from other sources, such as lawyers, employers or insurance companies, through correspondence or reports.

If you have concerns that the information recorded is not correct, please discuss your concerns with our administration staff or your psychologist.

Purpose of Holding Personal Information

Your personal information is gathered and used for the purpose of providing a psychological service to you. Your personal information is retained to document what happens during sessions and to enable your psychologist to provide a relevant and informed psychological service to you. This information and record-keeping are a necessary part of the services provided and guide treatment.

Consequences of Not Providing Personal Information

Psychologists are required to keep clear and accurate client records as part of their professional obligations. If you do not wish for your personal information to be collected, we may not be able to provide you with the psychological services. Please discuss any concerns you have with your psychologist.



Accessing Your Personal Information

At any stage, you can request access to your personal information kept on file. There may be exceptions that affect your ability to access the information, as outlined in the relevant legislation.

If you would like to access your information, please discuss it with us, or you can request it in writing. All written requests for access to information will be responded to in writing within 30 days, as per the Privacy Act.

Confidentiality of Information

Personal information gathered by your psychologist will remain confidential except in certain circumstances. In most cases, any sharing of information will only occur with your consent.

Our practice asks for your consent, via our annual service agreement, to share information when:

- Discussing with others, such as your GP, employer, or any agencies which may be paying for your attendance.
- Providing a written report regarding your assessment or treatment to another professional or agency, such as your GP, lawyer or insurance company.
- Consulting with colleagues, or during supervision. If your information is shared in this context, all care is taken to de-identify your information in such a way that you remain anonymous.

Exceptions to Confidentiality

There are times when your psychologist may release your information without obtaining your consent, such as:

- When a court requires information by issuing a subpoena, or providing information is otherwise required or authorised by law.
- When it is required because the psychologist must make a mandatory report on a concern.
- When the psychologist discloses information because they believe you or someone else is at risk of serious harm.



Data Breach Policy

In the event that any unauthorised access, disclosure or loss of your personal information occurs, Rural Psych will activate its data breach plan and use all reasonable endeavours to minimise any risk of consequential serious harm.

Requests for access and correction to client information

At any time, you may request to view and correct the personal information about you that is on file. Your psychologist may discuss the contents with you and/or give you a copy, subject to the exceptions in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).

If your psychologist is satisfied that your personal information is inaccurate, out of date or incomplete, reasonable steps will be taken in the circumstances to ensure that this information is corrected. All requests by you for access to or correction of personal information held about you should be lodged with your psychologist or our administration staff.

All written requests for access to information will be responded to in writing within 30 days (as per the Privacy Act), and an appointment will be made if necessary for clarification purposes.

Concerns

If you have a concern about the management of your personal information, you may inform your psychologist or our reception staff. Upon request, you can obtain a copy of the Australian Privacy Principles, which describe your rights and how your personal information should be handled.

Ultimately, if you wish to lodge a formal complaint about the use of, disclosure of, or access to, your personal information, you may do so with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner:

- By phone on 1300 363 992.
- Online at <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-complaints/lodge-a-privacy-complaint-with-us>
- By post to: Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, GPO Box 5288, Sydney, NSW 2001.



Multiple Relationships

The treating psychologist needs to be aware of the potential for being perceived as having a bias or conflict of interest through a multiple relationship. A multiple relationship occurs when a psychologist has an additional relationship with a client other than a clinical one. For example, the client is also the psychologist's netball coach. In the case of multiple relationships, the relationship could be perceived as compromising the clinical service's objectivity and safety.

Objectivity, trust, and bias should be considered when deciding whether to engage in a multiple relationship. Generally speaking, multiple relationships should be avoided where possible. Emergencies with an immediate need for psychological intervention may be an exception.

In rural settings, the clinician must weigh the risks and benefits for the client, as multiple relationships may not be avoidable. If there are no other options regarding appropriate available practitioners, the benefits of engaging in treatment must outweigh the risks for the client.

Whenever possible, supervision should be sought when considering whether to proceed with clinical service delivery where multiple relationships exist. In particular, it is considered inappropriate to see members of the same family at the same time. The clinician needs to document their decision-making process thoroughly.