

COMMUNICATION POLICY

As new technology develops there may be a need to update this policy. Clients will be notified in writing of any policy changes, and a copy of the updated electronic communications policy will be provided upon request. The most current version of this policy will be found online. It is important that as we communicate, we also protect the confidentiality that is vital to therapy.

Non-Secure Electronic Communication Overview

Email, text and other forms of electronic messages provide convenient methods of communication. Please be advised that these methods, in their typical form, are not confidential means of communication. Therefore, Harles Counseling, PLLC prefers to use email communication and text messaging only with your permission, and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another arrangement. If you use these methods to communicate with me, there is a reasonable chance that a third party may be able to gain access to those messages. The types of parties that may intercept these messages include, but are not limited to:

- Those who have access to your phone, computer, or other devices that you use to read and write messages
- Your employer, if you use your work email to communicate with us
- Internet server administrators and others who monitor Internet traffic

If there are people in your life that you do not want accessing these communications, please talk with me about ways to keep your communications safe and confidential.

Let me know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this.

Email

Email is not a confidential form of communication. Therefore, Harles Counseling, PLLC chooses not to conduct counseling by email, and discourages the use of email communication between clients and counselling staff, except for administrative purposes, such as arranging or changing appointments and for forwarding links to articles, meditations, books and other resources to enhance your therapy.

There is still a possibility that your privacy may be compromised when appointment times and resources are sent electronically. Please read below for more information:

1. No form of encryption is used by the Harles Counseling, PLLC for outgoing emails.
2. Harles Counseling, PLLC sends appointment reminders via email. If you do not wish to receive reminders via email, please inform us of that preference.
3. Emails will generally be responded to within 2 business days (unless you are unavailable for

some reason), and if a response has not been received within that time, you can call 919-601-4207 to leave a message for your counselor.

4. Please identify the purpose of emails, and their urgency, in the subject line (for example: "Question- Non-urgent", or "Cancellation, request to Reschedule-Urgent")
5. Email messages become part of your counseling records and may be shared along with your record should the documents be subpoenaed by the courts, or other governing agencies.
8. You may revoke your consent for email communication at any time. You may discuss any questions or concerns with your counselor further in your next session.

Text Messaging

Harles Counseling, PLLC may send appointment reminders via text message. If you do not wish to receive reminders via text message, please inform me of that preference. While this is an easy and convenient way to send communication, it is also not secure and you may want to consider the risks to your confidentiality surrounding your access to counselling services. Below is a list of potential risks associated with the use of text messaging:

1. Communication issues can arise when communicating in text due to the lack of access to visual or voice cues, as well as the possibility of limited space, and the chance of misunderstanding when using "shorthand" words or characters to represent meaning.
2. A lost or misplaced cell phone, or a phone simply left in an insecure location, can inadvertently communicate to others that you are in counselling.
3. Text messages are intended to be used for booking, rescheduling, or cancelling appointments and for links to resources to be made accessible to you for enhancing your therapeutic process. Should they be used inappropriately (for example to "chat" or to engage in emotional support), the messages will not be responded to and this may be discussed for clarification in your next session.
5. Typically, text messages will be responded to within 1-2 business days, unless I am unavailable for some reason. If you are in a crisis and if you we have agreed to crisis contact, you may try to send a text message requesting a phone call, but if this is not responded to in a timely manner, please call 911 or a local mobile crisis.
6. All text messages become part of your counseling records and as such may be subject to being shared along with your record should the documents be subpoenaed by the courts, or other governing agencies.
7. You may revoke your consent for text message communication at any time. You are also welcome to discuss any questions or concerns with your counsellor further in your next session.

Third-Party Access to Communications

When you use electronic communications methods, such as email, texting, online video, etc., there are various technicians and administrators who maintain these services, and who could conceivably have access to the content of those communications.

If you use your work email to communicate electronically, your employer may access to those communications. There may be similar issues involved in school email or other email accounts associated with organizations that you are affiliated with.

Furthermore, people with access to your computer, mobile phone, or other devices may gain access to your email or text messages. It is important to contemplate the risks involved if any of these persons were to access the messages exchanged with your counsellor.

Sharing Electronic Communication with Others

If you wish to publicly reveal information related to your therapy through electronic communication with your counselor, it is requested that you consult with your counselor before doing so.

Between Session Contact

Between session contact with your counselor is normally limited to short messages regarding scheduling sessions. Longer contact is possible, by arrangement, and the charge will be prorated per your session fees. Phone calls lasting longer than 15 minutes will be considered as additional counseling services and billed accordingly.

Collection and Storage of Personal Information

Storage and collection of client information is in accordance with HIPPA and in accordance with professional guidelines.

Emergencies

Harles Counseling, PLLC is not an emergency service. If you are in crisis or require emergency mental health assistance please call 911, go to the emergency room of your nearest hospital, or contact a crisis line in your area.

Print Name: _____

Client Signature: _____

Date: _____