
CODE OF PRACTICE/CONFIDENTIALITY INFORMATION

Psychologists are Registered with the Psychology Board of Australia. As such, Psychologists are regulated and must adhere to an Ethical Code. The Australian Psychological Society provides the Ethical Code followed by Psychologists. This Code states a number of things and guides a Psychologist's treatment of clients, the community, and other professionals. If your Psychologist violates ethics, you have a right to make a formal complaint to the Psychology Board of Australia and/or the Australian Psychological Society.

Counsellors in Australia are not regulated to the same extent that Psychologists are regulated. Counselling is voluntarily regulated in Australia. Counsellors who are members of the two main Counselling groups in Australia conform to their association's Code of Practice. The two main counselling associations in Australia are the Australian Counselling Association and the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia. Together these Associations have a joint Register of Counsellors called The Australian Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists. If you have a complaint against a Counsellor you may make this to the organisation to which they belong and/or your local Health Services Commissioner.

Psychologists and counsellors should ethically maintain the confidentiality and privacy of their clients. This means that what is discussed in session remains confidential. This includes both written as well as oral information. There are, however, exceptions to this confidentiality and you should be aware of these exceptions.

- Duty to warn and protect - when a client discloses intentions or a serious plan to harm another person we are required to warn the intended victim and report this information to the appropriate authorities. Additionally when a client discloses or implies a serious plan for suicide we are required to notify the appropriate authorities and make reasonable attempts to safeguard life.
- Abused/neglected children and vulnerable adults – if we are made aware that a child, or a vulnerable adult, is being or has been abused/neglected we must report this information to the appropriate authorities.
- Minor/Guardianship – parents or legal guardians of non-emancipated minors may have the right to access client records.

- Insurance providers (where applicable) - insurance companies and other third party payers, such as WorkCover, are given information that is requested to facilitate client services and satisfy reporting obligations.
- General Medical Practitioners – if you are being seen by a Clinician under a Mental Health Care Plan then your Clinician has reporting obligations to your General Medical Practitioner. Generally, this includes a report after you have met your Clinician for a specified number of sessions or a specific period of time.
- Subpoena – if you are involved with the Legal/Court system records could be subpoenaed. If this occurs your Clinician will be compelled to release information as required by the Court system.

Information that is often requested includes, but is not limited to, the type of services provided, the dates and times of services provided, diagnosis, treatment plan and application, a description of difficulties presented by the client, the progress of therapy, actual case notes and summaries, and billing specifics.

Please note that email and mobile phone text/sms messages are not generally considered secure modes of communication. If you do not wish to receive or send information via these modes of communication please clearly let this office know as text reminders are often used by us to confirm appointments and email, as well as text, can be used to facilitate contact between you and your clinician between regular sessions. Appointment reminders are sent via a service called HealthKit and not directly from your clinician's practice.

Client records are generally kept for seven years from last client contact. If a client was a minor at the time of contact the records are kept for 7 years once the age of 18 is reached. When allowed by law, historical records are confidentially disposed of via an accredited shredding service. Information is collected to aid with assessment and treatment and is kept securely. If you do not consent to the collection of your personal information Dr Pelling will not be able to see you in practice and it is generally not possible for you to be seen using a pseudonym or anonymously.

Please note that this practice sees clients at *Summerford Specialists* and this location has video cameras recording all entry/exits into the premises. These images are taken only for security purposes and are regularly destroyed when recorded over on an approximate two week cycle, unless an incident needs to be preserved and reported to authorities.

There are other limitations to confidentiality imposed by law. Most specifically, the professions regulated by AHPRA have confidentiality limitations related to notifications. If you have questions about what is confidential and private in our work together please feel free to talk to me or, alternatively, you may make a free call to the Legal Services Commission to gain advice.