



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR SIOUX FALLS PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

This document outlines Sioux Falls Psychological Services and River Counseling Services office policies related to use of Social Media. We want you to be well-informed on the benefits, limitations, and boundaries of our use of social media. Please read this document to understand how we conduct ourselves on the Internet as mental health professionals, and how you can expect your therapist to respond to various interactions that may occur between you and your therapist on the Internet.

If you have any questions about anything in this document, please bring them up when you meet with your therapist. Technology is constantly changing, so it is likely that this document will be updated from time to time. Should an update occur, we will make an updated version available to you.

Friending

We do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). Doing so can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of a therapeutic relationship and therefore it is not in your best interest for your therapist to friend you.

Following

Some of our therapists may have a social media presence – blogs, Twitter accounts, Facebook, Instagram, etc. When that is the case, our therapists make a concerted effort to maintain the most private settings possible on most sites, while other sites might be readily accessible to you. Should you choose to follow your therapist's blog or Twitter account (and doing so is at your discretion alone) and your name is readily recognizable to your therapist, you and your therapist may briefly discuss the situation and its potential impact on your working relationship.

Our therapists will not follow a current or former client on any social media platform. Exploring the casual content of a client's life on social media sites can have a potentially negative impact on the therapeutic relationship. If there are things from your online life that you wish to share with your therapist, please bring them into your therapy session where they can be viewed and explored during therapy.

Interacting with your Therapist

Security is improving, but more needs to be done to protect confidential information. There are several important things to know about how we work with client-therapist interactions using social media platforms.

First, do not use sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, or Twitter (or similar) to attempt to message your therapist. These are not considered secure sites, and your information may not be kept confidential as a result. Further, your therapist does not monitor these sites and will not reply to messages sent through these sites.

Second, there may be rare situations where you may have access to your therapist's personal phone information. Unless an agreement is struck between you and your therapist in the course of therapy, you are not to contact your therapist using the therapist's personal phone number. Please note that cell phones, and thus calls or texting, are not secure. Any use of these ways of interacting need to be discussed in advance, and you (the client) need to agree that doing so is at your personal risk of a potential breach of confidentiality. Although this is uncommon, it is not unheard of.

Third, interacting through email is a commonly accepted practice, and some platforms (such as Gmail) have reasonable security protection. However, unless your email provider specifically says your emails are secure, you need to know that your confidentiality when using email is not protected and you are using it at your own risk of a confidentiality breach. Again, this is also uncommon, but it is not unheard of.

At Sioux Falls Psychological Services we use a HIPAA-compliant email platform called Virtru. Virtru provides us with a Business Associate Agreement that guarantees encryption and thus confidentiality. Virtru provides end-to-end encryption and effectively protects your personal health information and any email content or attachments. If we initiate an email to you, know that it is secure. If we respond to an email you choose to send to us, know that our response will be secure, and the whole thread will be secure. If we send confidential information to your physician or other professional caregiver, know that such email exchanges are secure.

Our strong encouragement to you is to avoid initiating an email exchange with your therapist that involves content related to your therapy sessions. Further, avoid using email in any emergency situation since we cannot guarantee you that we will see the email or respond to it in a timely manner. You and your therapist can talk about how you do or do not wish to use email as an aspect of your therapy.

Use of Search Engines

Our therapists will not make use of search engines to search for clients. This would only ever occur in the rarest of circumstances. For instance, if your therapist has reason to suspect you are in danger and your emergency contact information is incorrect or not working, your therapist might do a search of your name to find you, to find someone close to you, or to check on your status in some way. In such an unusual and rare situation your therapist will fully document the activity and discuss it with you when you next meet. In other words, if in the rarest of situations your therapist believes he or she is professionally obligated to do a search for you on social

media, you will be informed by your therapist that this has taken place.

Business Review Sites

Business review sites like Yelp or Healthgrades have become common, and you may find your therapist on such sites. These listings have been added automatically and are not initiated by Sioux Falls Psychological Services. If you find your therapist on any of these sites, please know that their listing is not a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as a client. Our therapists will never solicit testimonials from you.

Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, your therapist cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. You are encouraged to take your own privacy as seriously as our therapists take our commitment of confidentiality to you. Our therapists do not make it a habit to look at these sites and may never see a review or comment you might leave on such sites. It is always more effective and more confidential to bring your positive and negative opinions and perspectives into the therapy process where they can be discussed openly and without fear of a breach of confidentiality. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish who your therapist is and how you feel about the therapy you are receiving from them.

If at any time you feel your therapist has done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with them, you can always contact the Director of Counseling Services at Sioux Falls Psychological Services, or you can contact the appropriate state licensing board.

Telemental Health

Sioux Falls Psychological Services provides video-based psychotherapy services utilizing the Zoom platform. We purchase the use of Zoom's HIPAA-compliant platform that is accompanied by a Business Associate Agreement. That agreement guarantees end-to-end encryption and thus confidentiality. At no time is the video or audio of an online session accessible in cyberspace. There are instances when it is necessary and appropriate for a therapist to record a session (legal purposes or requirements; supervision/training requirements). However, your sessions will never be recorded unless you agree with the need to record and provide written permission for that to take place. When the purpose is training or supervision, recorded sessions are not added to the client's chart and are deleted once the training or supervision purpose has been completed. Clients also agree not to record therapy sessions unless the therapist has granted permission to do so, and signed permission is in the chart. Further, clients are not allowed to record, either audio or video recording, anywhere on the premises of SFPS in order to preserve the confidentiality of other SFPS clients and staff.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review our Social Media Policy. If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies or procedures, you are encouraged to bring them up with your therapist.