

# Adolescent Informed Consent

## Beth Spring Therapy

### What to expect

The purpose of meeting with a therapist is to get help with problems in your life that are bothering you. You may be here because you want to talk to a professional about these problems. Or, you may be here because your parent, guardian, doctor or teacher had concerns about you. When we meet, we will discuss these problems. I will ask questions, listen to you and help you develop a plan. It is important for you to feel comfortable talking to me about the issues that are bothering you. Sometimes these issues will include things you don't want your parents or guardians to know about. For most people, knowing that what they say will be kept private helps them feel more comfortable and have more trust in their counselor or therapist. Privacy, also called confidentiality, is an important and necessary part of good counseling.

*As a general rule, I will keep the information you share with me in our sessions confidential, unless I have your written consent to disclose certain information.* There are exceptions to this rule that are important for you to understand. In some situations, I am required by law or by professional guidelines to disclose information whether or not I have your permission.

### Confidentiality cannot be maintained when

- You tell me you plan to harm or to kill yourself, and I believe you have the intent and ability to do so in the very near future. I must inform a parent or guardian what you have told me and how serious I believe this threat to be. I must make sure that you are protected from harming yourself.
- You tell me you plan to harm or to kill someone else who can be identified, and I believe you have the intent and ability to do so in the near future. In this case, I must inform your parent or guardian, and I must inform the person whom you intend to harm.
- You are doing things that could cause serious harm to you or someone else, even if you do not *intend* to harm yourself or another person. In these situations, I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether a parent or guardian should be informed.
- You tell me you are being abused, physically, sexually or emotionally, or that you have been abused in the past. In this situation, I am required by law to report the abuse to the Virginia Department of Social Services.
- You are involved in a court case and a request is made for information about your counseling or therapy. If this happens, I will not disclose information without your written agreement *unless* the court requires me to. I will do all I can within the law to protect your confidentiality, and if I am required to disclose information to the court, I will inform you that this is happening.

## Communicating with your parent or guardian

Except for situations such as those mentioned above, I will not tell your parent or guardian specific things you share with me in our private therapy sessions. This includes activities and behavior that your parent/guardian would not approve of or would be upset by -- but that do not put you at risk of serious and immediate harm. However, if your risk-taking behavior becomes more serious, then I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether you are in serious and immediate danger of being harmed. If I feel that you are in such danger, I will communicate this information to your parent or guardian.

**Example:** If you tell me that you have tried alcohol at a few parties, I would keep this information confidential. If you tell me that you are drinking and driving or that you are a passenger in a car with a driver who is drunk, I would not keep this information confidential.

**Example:** If you tell me that you are having protected sex with a boyfriend or girlfriend, I would keep this information confidential. If you tell me that, on several occasions, you have engaged in unprotected sex with people you do not know or in unsafe situations, I will not keep this information confidential.

You should also know that, by law in Virginia, your parent/guardian has the right to see any written records I keep about our sessions. It is extremely rare that a parent/guardian would ever ask to look at these records.

## Communicating with other adults

**School:** I will not share information with your school unless I have your permission and permission from your parent or guardian. Sometimes I may ask to speak to someone at your school to find out how things are going for you. Also, it may be helpful for me to give suggestions to your teacher or counselor at school. If I want to contact your school, or if someone at your school wants to contact me, I will discuss it with you and ask for your written permission.

**Doctors:** Sometimes your doctor and I may need to work together; for example, if you need to take medication in addition to seeing a counselor or therapist. I will get your written permission and permission from your parent/guardian before sharing information with your doctor.

Minor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_