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EXPLANATION OF LIMITS TO CONFIDENTIALITY FOR ADOLESCENTS

What to Expect

The purpose of meeting with a therapist is to get help with problems that are bothering you or that are keeping you from being successful in important areas of your life. You may be here because you wanted to get support. Or, you may be here because your parent, guardian, doctor or teacher had concerns about you. When we meet we will discuss these concerns. I will ask questions, listen to you and suggest a plan for improving these situations.

It is important that you 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 consent to disclose certain information. There are, however, exceptions to this rule that are important for you to understand before you share personal information with me in a therapy session.

In some situations I am required by law or by the guidelines of my profession to disclose information whether or not I have your permission. I have listed some of these situations below.

Confidentiality Cannot Be Maintained When...

- You tell me you plan to cause serious harm or death to yourself and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. I must take steps to inform a parent or guardian of 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 cause serious harm or death to someone else who can be identified and I believe you have the intent and the ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. In this situation 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 Family Protective Services.
- You are involved in a court case and a request is made for information about your counseling. If this happens I will not disclose information without your written consent **unless** the court requires me to. I will do all I can within the law to protect your confidentiality. If I am required to disclose information to the court I will let you know that this is happening.

Communicating with Your Parent(s) or Guardian(s)

Except for situations such as those mentioned above, I typically 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 grave and immediate danger of

being harmed. If I believe that you are in such danger then I will communicate this information to your parent or guardian.

For example, if you tell me that you 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 that information confidential from your parent/guardian. If you tell me, or if I believe based on things you've told me, that you are addicted to alcohol, I would not keep that information confidential.

You can always ask me questions about the types of information I would disclose. You can ask in the form of a "hypothetical situation." In other words, "If someone told you that they were doing "X", would you tell their parents?"

Even if I have agreed to keep information confidential, I may believe that it is important for your parents/guardians to know what is going on in your life. In those situations I will encourage you to tell your parents/guardians and will help you find the best way to tell them. Also, when talking with your parents, I may sometimes describe problems in general terms, without using specifics, in order to help them know how to be more helpful to you.

I have read and understood this explanation of limits to confidentiality.

Printed name of client

Stephen L. McCown, LPC-S

Signature of client

Date

Date

Parent/guardian printed name

Parent/guardian signature

Date