



G R E A T E R
HARTFORD
W E L L N E S S

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greaterhartfordwellness.com

Electronic Communication & Social Media Policy

January 2019

In order to maintain clarity regarding our use of electronic modes of communication during your treatment, Greater Hartford Wellness has prepared the following policy.

The use of various types of electronic communications is common in our society, and many individuals believe this is the preferred method of communication with others, whether their relationships are social or professional. Many of these common modes of communication, however, put your privacy at risk and can be inconsistent with the law and with the standards of the profession. Consequently, this policy has been prepared to assure the security and confidentiality of your treatment and to assure that it is consistent with ethics and the law.

If you have any questions about this policy, please discuss them with your clinician.

EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

Please keep in mind the following general information on email privacy:

- Information stored on our computers is encrypted.
- Most popular email services (e.g. Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo) do not use encrypted email.
- When you send us an email, the information that is sent is not encrypted. This means a third party may be able to access the information and read it since it is transmitted over the Internet. In addition, once an email is received by you, someone may be able to access your email account and read it.
- Email is a very popular and convenient way to communicate for many people, so the federal government provided guidance on email and HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) in their latest modification to the HIPAA act. The information is available at:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-01-25/pdf/2013-01073.pdf>.

The guidelines state that if a patient has been made aware of the risks of unencrypted email, and that same patient provides consent to receive health information via email, then a health entity may send that patient personal medical information via unencrypted email.

Risks of using email:

The transmission of client information by email has a number of risks that clients should consider prior to the use of email. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Email can be circulated, forwarded, stored electronically and on paper, and broadcast to unintended recipients.
- Email senders can easily misaddress an email and send the information to an undesired recipient.
- Backup copies of emails may exist even after the sender and/or the recipient has deleted his or her copy.
- Employers and online services have a right to inspect emails sent through their company systems.
- Email can be intercepted, altered, forwarded or used without authorization or detection.
- Email can be used as evidence in court.
- Email may not be secure and therefore it is possible that the confidentiality of such communications may be breached by a third party.

How Greater Hartford Wellness uses email:

- Greater Hartford Wellness (GHW) uses email communication only with your permission and only for administrative and educational purposes unless we have made another agreement.
- That means that email exchanges with the office should be limited to things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters and other related issues.
- Emails should be concise. The client/parent/legal guardian should call and/or schedule an appointment to discuss complex and/or sensitive situations.
- GHW cannot guarantee but will use reasonable means to maintain security and confidentiality of email information sent and received.
- GHW is not liable for improper disclosure of confidential information that is not caused by GHW's intentional misconduct.
- All email will usually be printed and filed into the client's medical record.
- GHW will not forward client's/parent's/legal guardian's identifiable emails to a third party. Please do not email about clinical matters because this is not a secure contact method.
- **If you need to discuss a clinical matter, please feel free to call to discuss it on the phone or wait until your therapy session. The telephone or face-to-face context simply is much more secure as a mode of communication.**
- ***Email should not be used to communicate in an emergency situation. We make every effort to respond to phone calls within 24 hours, except on weekends and holidays. GHW cannot guarantee that any particular email will be read and responded to within any particular period of time. In case of an emergency, please call 860.878.2028. If we are not immediately available by phone, please call 911, contact local crisis services at 211 or go to the nearest emergency room.***
- With your permission, GHW offers automated text and/or email reminders for appointments from our electronic scheduling system.

NEWSLETTER & EMAIL MARKETING

Greater Hartford Wellness publishes a newsletter on a quarterly basis. You may choose to receive this by email or we have paper copies in our waiting room. We also occasionally inform our clients of special events and workshops via email. You can select not to receive this type of communication from us.

TEXT MESSAGING

Because text messaging is not a secure communication method, GHW does not send text messages or respond to text messages from anyone. So, please do not text message.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is NOT an appropriate or acceptable way to communicate with your clinician. We do NOT communicate with clients through social media platforms. Greater Hartford Wellness has a company Instagram profile. We use this for educational purposes only.

Greater Hartford Wellness Instagram

- This is our only professional social media platform.
- Following our page does NOT imply a professional or other relationship has been established between you and GHW.
- Because our page is public, you do not need to become a “follower” to view our content.
- Be aware that following our page can create a privacy risk for you. We never share client information on social media but someone may see that you follow us and thus assume you are a client.

Other Personal Social Media

Our team participates on various social networks as individuals, but not in a professional capacity. If you have an online presence, there is a possibility that you may encounter our personal/private pages by accident or through “suggested” connections. If that occurs, please discuss it with your clinician during your time together. Communications like this have a high potential to compromise the professional relationship. Please do not contact us in this way. We will not respond and will terminate any online contact.

WEBSITE

Our website is www.greaterhartfordwellness.com. The purpose of our website is to provide information about our practice and what is happening. We also have a blog that we use to share helpful information. If you have any questions about information you read on our website, please ask your clinician.

WEB SEARCHES

Greater Hartford Wellness will not use web searches to gather information about you without your permission. We believe that this violates your privacy rights; however, we understand that you might choose to gather information about me in this way. In this day and age, there is an incredible amount of information available about individuals on the internet, much of which may actually be known to that person and some of which may be inaccurate or unknown. If you encounter any information about your clinician through web searches, or in any other fashion for that matter, please discuss this with your clinician

during your time together so that you can deal with it and its potential impact on your treatment.

Recently it has become common for clients to review their health care provider on various websites. However, mental health professionals cannot respond to such comments because of confidentiality restrictions. It is also generally preferable for clients to discuss their concerns directly with their health care provider.

If you have concerns or questions about any aspect of your treatment or about any previously posted online reviews of GHW, please let your clinician know that you would like to discuss it.

Reference:

<https://www.trustinsurance.com/resources/articles/sample-electronic-communication-policy?ID=34&tabid=168>

INFORMED CONSENT

Client acknowledgement and agreement:

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand Greater Hartford Wellness' Electronic Communications & Social Media Policies. I understand the risks associated with the communication of email and/or social media messaging between GHW and me, and consent to the conditions and instructions outlined, as well as any other instructions that GHW may impose to communicate with me.

Place a check in the box next to your decision. You may withdraw your consent at any time; please notify your clinician should you change your consent.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes, allow general communication (scheduling & billing) via email | <input type="checkbox"/> no, do not communicate anything via email |
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes, allow email appointment reminders | <input type="checkbox"/> no, do not send email appointment reminders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes, allow text message appointment reminders | <input type="checkbox"/> no, do not allow text message appointment reminders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes, email me the newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> no, do not email me the newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes, email me updates about GHW workshops & events | <input type="checkbox"/> no, do not email me updates about GHW workshops & events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes, you may send mail to my home address | <input type="checkbox"/> no, do not send mail to my home address |
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes, you may leave voicemails at the following number: | <input type="checkbox"/> no, do not leave voicemails |

Client Name

Client Signature

Date

Parent/Legal Guardian Name

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

Date

Provider Name

Provider Signature

Date