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SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

Please, read this policy and ask questions to understand how Wetzel-Rasmussen Counseling Services (WRCS) staff members conduct themselves on the Internet as a mental health professional, how you can expect a WRCS staff member to respond to various interactions that may be presented and that involve WRCS staff members on the Internet. If you have any questions about anything within this document, you are encouraged to bring your concern or question up when you meet with your mental health professional. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when WRCS will need to update this policy. If the policy is updated so, WRCS will notify you in writing of any policy changes and make sure you have a copy of the updated policy.

Procedure:

1. **Friending**

WRCS staff members do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients/client's guardian on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). It is the belief at WRCS that adding clients as "friends" or contacts on these sites can compromise the client and/or the client's legal guardian's confidentiality and respective privacy of the therapeutic relationship. It may also blur the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about any aspect of this policy, please bring questions or concerns up when you meet with your mental health provider to talk more about it.

2. **Fanning**

Natalie Wetzel-Rasmussen and WRCS do not have a Facebook account after concluding that the potential risks of maintaining such a Page outweigh any potential gains. Please, report any information about fake accounts that you might encounter to WRCS.

The American Psychological Association's Ethics Code prohibits mental health providers from soliciting testimonials from clients. It is the belief at WRCS that the term "Fan" comes too close to an implied request for a public endorsement of WRCS.

3. **Following**

Clients will be informed that when WRCS staff members publish a blog, website and post on other forms of social media, WRCS staff members have no expectation that a client will want to follow the staff member's blog or social media stream. However, if the client uses an easily recognizable name on social media account and a WRCS staff member happens to notice that the client followed the staff member there, this occurrence may briefly be discussed it and its potential impact on the therapeutic relationship.

The primary concern is the client's privacy. If the you share this concern, there are more private ways to follow a WRCS staff member on social media (such as using an RSS feed or a locked Twitter list), which would eliminate a public link to the WRCS member's content. You are welcome to use your discretion in choosing whether to follow a WRCS staff member.

You are advised to note that a WRCS staff member will not follow you back. WRCS staff members only follow other health professionals on social media and do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter, etc. The belief at WRCS is that casual viewing of clients' online content outside of the therapy hour can create confusion in regard to whether it's being done as a part of a client's treatment or to satisfy the WRCS staff member's personal curiosity. In addition, viewing a client's online activities without the client's/client guardian's consent and without an explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially have a negative influence on the therapeutic relationship. If there are things from your online life that the you wish to share with your mental health provider, you are encouraged to bring the topic into the your session(s) where topic would be able to be viewed and explored with your mental health provider, during the therapy hour.

4. Interacting

You are asked to please not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact WRCS staff members (except for a return text to the front office staff if you need to change a scheduled appointment after the receipt of a text reminder of this session). These sites are not secure, and messages may not be read in a timely fashion. You are instructed not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with WRCS staff members in public online if the client already established a client/therapist relationship with a WRCS mental health employee. This policy informs that your engagement with WRCS staff in this way could compromise your confidentiality and that social media and electronic communications may also create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of the your legal medical record and will need to be documented and archived in your chart.

Note: If you had a need to contact WRCS staff between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone (715-275-3934), direct email at drnat@frontiernet.net , or by postal mail:

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WRCS front office staff initially receive all communications that come into the office then the information is given to the client's mental health provider. The WRCS phone number, email or by responding to reminder text messages (that are given to clients to alert her/him to her/his appointment time) is second best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

5. Use of Search Engines

You are informed that it is NOT a regular part of the practice at WRCS for staff members to search for clients on Google or Facebook or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis. If a WRCS staff member has a reason to suspect that a client is in danger and the client has not been in touch with the clinic via usual means (coming to appointments, phone, or email) there might be an instance in which using a search engine (to find the client, find someone close to the client, or to check on the client's recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring the client's welfare. These are unusual situations and if a WRCS staff member would ever resort to such means, the search shall be fully documented and the WRCS mental health provider shall discuss it with the client at the client's next meeting.

6. Google Reader

You are informed that WRCS staff members do not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you may want to share with WRCS staff members that you feel are relevant to your treatment whether the information included news items or things you created, you are encouraged to bring these items of interest into scheduled sessions.

7. Business Review Sites

You are informed that you may find the WRCS psychology practice on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Yahoo Local, Bing, or other places which list businesses. Some of these sites include forums in which users rate their providers and add reviews. Many of these sites comb search engines for business listings and automatically add listings regardless of whether the business has added itself to the site. If you should find the WRCS listing on any of these sites, please know that this listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from the person as a client of WRCS.

The American Psychological Association's Ethics Code states under Principle 5.05 that it is unethical for psychologists to solicit testimonials: "Psychologists do not solicit testimonials from current therapy clients/patients or other persons who because of their particular circumstances are vulnerable to undue influence."

Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, WRCS staff members cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. You are urged to take your own privacy as seriously as WRCS staff member's take the commitment of confidentiality to you. You are informed that if the you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with a WRCS staff member about your feelings about the therapeutic work that was done with your mental health provider at WRCS, there is a good possibility that the WRCS staff member may never see the posted communication.

If you are working with a WRCS mental health provider, you are encouraged to bring your feelings and reactions about the work directly into the therapy process. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide you and the WRCS provider are not a good fit. You are informed that the "Social Media and Other Electronic Communication" policy is not is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in therapy with a WRCS therapist (a.k.a., mental health provider) wherever and with whomever you choose. Confidentiality means that a WRCS staff member cannot tell people that you are a WRCS client and the American Psychological Association's Ethics Code prohibits WRCS staff members from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that you work with a WRCS therapist or how you feel about the treatment provided at WRCS, in any forum of your choosing.

You informed that if you do choose to write something on a business review site, WRCS staff members hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. You are urged to create a pseudonym that is not linked to your regular email address or friend networks for your own privacy and protection.

If you feel a WRCS staff member did something harmful or unethical and do not feel comfortable discussing it with the WRCS staff member, you can always contact the Board of Psychology, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services the mental health provider provided:

Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services
Division of Legal Services and Compliance
P.O. Box 7190
Madison, WI 53707-7190

Fax: (608) 266-2264

Email: dsps@wisconsin.gov

8. Location-Based Services

You are informed that if you use location-based services on your mobile phone that you are aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. WRCS staff members do not place WRCS as a check-in location on various sites such as Foursquare, Gowalla, Loopt, etc. However, if GPS tracking is enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise that you are a WRCS therapy client due to regular check-ins at WRCS on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you intentionally "checks in," from WRCS or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

9. Email

You are informed that it is the preferred WRCS policy for clients to use phone, email or respond to reminder text messages only to arrange or modify appointments. The client will be asked to please not email (or text) WRCS staff members content related to the client's therapy sessions, as email (and text) is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with WRCS staff members by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of the client and the WRCS Internet service providers. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of the Internet service provider. You are informed that any emails received by WRCS staff members from you and any responses that WRCS staff members send to you become a part of your legal record.

10. Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review the WRCS Social Media and Other Electronic Communication Policy. If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding potential interactions with WRCS staff members on the Internet, do bring them to the attention of a WRCS mental health provider so that the issue can be discussed.