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Email and Text Messaging Policy

Electronic communication, including email and text messaging, has rapidly evolved in recent years and is likely to continue to do so. Regulations for Mental Health Professionals using electronic communication is also evolving. I seek to keep up with regulations and standards in the field relevant to electronic communication in order to protect your confidentiality and security. There are four ways that I can send and receive electronic messages that are discussed below.

Client Portal

I can receive messages through the client portal in MyTheraBook. This is the preferred and most secure way to send me messages.

Text Messages

Text messaging is not a secure form of communication. Therefore, I discourage clients from sending text messages even though my phone number does accept text messages. I typically do not respond to text messages in order to protect your confidentiality. If you do send text messages, I suggest you do not include any personal information. Some clients prefer to use text messaging for basic information, such as letting me know if they are running late for an appointment. I do read these messages; however, if I respond it will be brief and typically just letting you know I have received the message.

Risk of Using Email

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

1. Email can be circulated, forwarded, stored electronically and on paper, and broadcast to unintended recipients.
2. Email senders can easily misaddress an email and send the information to an undesired recipient.
3. Backup copies of emails may exist even after the sender and/or the recipient has deleted his or her copy.
4. Employers and on-line services have a right to inspect emails sent through their company systems.

5. Emails can be intercepted, altered, forwarded, or used without authorization or detection.
6. Email can be used as evidence in court.
7. Emails may not be secure and therefore it is possible that the confidentiality of such communications may be breached by a third party.

I have two email accounts, both of which are consistent with the security standards for electronic communications for psychologists. If sending email, it is recommended that you send messages to louis@drlouishoffman.com, which is a Hushmail email account that is encrypted. In order to read any messages from this email you will need to have a Hushmail email or set up a Hushmail login connected with your email. With the second option, you do not need a new email, but do need a login to read any messages received from my Hushmail account. My other email, drhoffman@louis-hoffman.com, is encrypted on my end; however, it does not provide the same level of security for messages you receive as this will be dependent upon the security of your email. In sending messages to either account, you are consenting for me to respond to these emails.

Conditions for the Use of Emails and Messages

I cannot guarantee but will use reasonable means to maintain security and confidentiality of email and message information sent and received. I am not liable for improper disclosure of confidential information that is not caused by intentional misconduct. Clients/Parents/Legal Guardians must acknowledge and consent to the following conditions if using Email or messaging:

1. Email and text messaging are not appropriate for urgent or emergency situations. I cannot guarantee that any particular email or message will be read and responded to within any particular period of time. I do not check his email, phone messages, or text messages on weekends or most evenings. While I do check email most weekdays, I cannot guarantee that I will check or respond to email daily.
2. Email should be concise. The client/parent/legal guardian should call and/or schedule an appointment to discuss complex and/or sensitive situations.
3. All email or a summary of the email will usually be printed and filed into the client's medical record.
4. I will not forward client's/parent's/legal guardian's identifiable emails without the client's/parent's/legal guardian's written consent, except as authorized by law.
5. Clients/parents/legal guardians should not use email or messages for communication of sensitive medical information.
6. The provider is not liable for breaches of confidentiality caused by the client or any third party.
7. It is the client's/parent's/legal guardian's responsibility to follow up and/or schedule an appointment if warranted.
8. I recommend that clients delete emails to and from me and remove them from a trash folder in order to protect the client's confidentiality if their email is ever hacked or otherwise compromised.
9. I do not respond to many Emails and text messages, including Emails just providing information. When I do respond, responses will typically be limited to 4-5 sentences. If a

more in-depth response is needed, it is preferable to discuss in the next appointment or over the phone.

10. Except in crisis situations, the time spent on messages and emails is limited to 10-minutes per week. If more time is required, you may be billed on prorated basis for that time, which may not be covered by your insurance. For longer emails or messages, I will discuss this in advance whether you want me to read the email/message and bill you for this time.