

Electronic/Digital Communication Consent Form

Digital communication is a useful means of communicating. However, transmitting confidential information digitally can create a number of risks that you need to be aware of. Digital communication is defined as email, text message (text message fees may apply), and video conferencing.

Electronic messages of all types may pass through and be stored on various computers in the World Wide Web (internet). New Growth Counseling Services (NGCS) employees do their best to maintain confidentiality over digital mediums, however, they cannot guarantee confidentiality. Be aware that other professionals with whom you are involved may email NGCS and NGCS cannot guarantee the confidentiality of emails sent from other parties.

All email messages sent or received that concern your diagnosis or treatment or that are part of your medical record will be treated as part of your protected health information (PHI). Reasonable means will be used to protect the security and confidentiality of the email. NGCS cannot guarantee the security and confidentiality of email.

Specific risks of digital communications include, but are not limited to:

- a. Email can be immediately broadcasted worldwide and received by many intended and unintended recipients. Other digital media may be saved and viewed by an unintended audience.
- b. Recipients can forward email messages to other recipients without the original sender's permission or knowledge.
- c. Users can easily send an email to an incorrect address.
- d. Email is easier to falsify than handwritten or signed documents.
- e. Backup copies of email may exist even after the sender or the recipient has deleted their copy.
- f. Emails can be misinterpreted in tone and meaning.
- g. If you are sending your emails from your employer's computer, your employer does have access to your emails.
- h. While it is against the law to discriminate, any employer who has access to employee's emails can use the information to discriminate against the employee. Additionally, the employee could suffer social stigma from a workplace disclosure.
- i. Insurance companies who learn of your personal health information (PHI) information could deny you coverage.
- j. Although counselors will endeavor to read and respond to email correspondence promptly, they cannot guarantee that a particular email message will be read and responded to within a particular time frame. Emails may go into the junk or spam folder and could be missed by the counselor.
- k. NGCS email is provided through Gmail and is MIME encoded for 8-bit. Email accounts and personal computers are password protected.
- l. If you are using a public computer or a computer on a shared network, we highly suggest you do not enter your personal information. Do not use "auto-remember" for your user name and password. If you use a public computer be sure to decline auto-remember and logout when you're finished.
- m. If NGCS employees email documents, they will be password protected and the password will be sent in a separate email.
- n. Video communication companies may store your instant messages, voicemail, and video messages for 30 days or longer.
- o. NGCS requires photo identification for video conferencing to verify the identity of the person with whom we are communicating. We may also use code words or phrases.
- p. Medical information is sensitive and unauthorized disclosure can be damaging. You should not use email for communications concerning diagnosis or treatment of AIDS/HIV infection, other sexually transmissible diseases, and mental health, developmental disability, or substance abuse issues.

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Your consent to digital correspondence includes your understanding of the following conditions, in addition to the above stated risks:

- a) Though all efforts will be made to respond promptly, this may not be the case. Because the response cannot be guaranteed, please do not use email in a life-threatening emergency. Call 911.
- b) You are responsible for following up with your counselor if you have not received a response.
- c) NGCS will take reasonable steps to ensure that all information shared through emails is kept private and confidential. However, NGBH is not liable for improper disclosure of confidential information that is not a result of our negligence or misconduct.
- d) If you consent to the use of digital communication, you are responsible for informing your therapist of any type of information that you do not want sent to you by email.
- e) You are responsible for protecting your password and access to your email account and any email you send or you receive from NGCS to ensure your confidentiality. Your therapist cannot be held liable if there is a breach of confidentiality caused by a breach in your account security.
- f) Any communication that you engage in that discusses your diagnosis or treatment constitutes informed consent to the information being transmitted. If you wish to discontinue electronic communication, you must submit written consent or an email informing your therapist that you are withdrawing consent to digital communication.

- Yes, I have read the above and consent to digital communication.
- Yes, I have read the above and consent only to _____ (text message, email, and video).

Print Name

Client Signature

Date

Email address

Cell number

If parent is signing on behalf of a client under 13, please complete the information below:

Print name of Parent or Guardian

Date

Signature of parent

Date

Please do not put the following information in digital communication:

