



# STICKS & STONES

## THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

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## Confidentiality Policy

It is required that therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and most other mental health professionals protect their client's privacy by not revealing the contents of therapy.

### What is Client Confidentiality?

Confidentiality includes not just the contents of therapy but often the fact that a client is in treatment. For example, it is expected that therapists will not acknowledge their clients if they run into them outside of therapy to protect client confidentiality. Other ways confidentiality is protected include:

- Not leaving revealing information on voicemail or text.
- Not acknowledging to outside parties that a client has an appointment.
- Not discussing the contents of therapy with a third party without the explicit permission of the client .

Your Sticks and Stones Therapeutic Therapist is a member of

- The Social Work Association
- The Family Therapy Association
- The Counselling and Psychotherapy Association
- The Relationship Association

All associations and members are mandatory reporters and have a duty of care to commit to confidentiality. Therapists who break confidentiality can get in trouble with these associations.

## Exceptions To Confidentiality Rules

- As a mandatory reporter, the therapist at Sticks and Stones is required to make a report if a client is a threat to themselves or others, in which case a therapist must notify the person in danger or notify someone who can keep the client safe. In these circumstances, therapists often seek hospitalization for their clients.
- It is important to note that a therapist will not automatically break confidentiality if a client reports thoughts about suicide. Typically, a client needs to state an intent to act on those thoughts and have a specific suicide plan before hospitalization is considered. An individual will not be hospitalized against their will for simply seeking help.
- If the therapist believes a child or disabled person is being abused. For example, if a child has unexplained injuries and acts frightened of their parent, a therapist may have reasonable suspicion of abuse. As a mandated reporter, the therapist has a legal duty to make every effort to protect and report their suspicions to authorities.
- In rare cases, the therapist can be forced to testify against their clients through a subpoena.

## Confidentiality For Children

Confidentiality for children is a hotly contested issue. In many jurisdictions, minors are not considered developed enough to consent to treatment, so parents are expected to consent on their behalf. Thus, minors do not have the strong confidentiality rights that most adults have in those places.

A lack of confidentiality can interfere with the therapeutic relationship. A child may be reluctant to disclose information to a therapist if they know their parents will eventually learn about it. To promote trust with the minor in therapy, many clinicians seek the permission of the clients' parents to keep treatment confidential.

Even when parents do not agree to confidentiality, therapists will not typically reveal details about their discussions in therapy. Instead, they will give information about broad treatment goals and progress. For example, a therapist may report that a child has anxiety and is being treated with cognitive behavioural therapy. However, they would not have to report that the child is stressed about getting low grades in school.

## Confidentiality Forms

At the beginning of treatment or during intake, Sticks and Stones will create client paperwork detailing their privacy policy. This information will include an informed consent form that the client or parent must sign if the client is under 18.