



Social Media Policy

This document outlines the social media policy for The Family Connection. Please read it to understand how we conduct ourselves on the Internet as a mental health professional and how you can expect us to respond to various interactions that may occur between us on the Internet. If you have questions about anything within this document, I encourage you to bring them up with your therapist or with the Clinical Director. As a new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when we need to update this policy. If we do so, we will notify you in writing of any policy changes, offer a printed copy of the updated policy or you can view it on our website at www.NMFamilyConnection.com.

Fanning

The Family Connection has various social media sites (Facebook, Instagram, Yelp, Healthgrades, Yahoo, Psychotherapy Networker, TherapySite, and Google), allowing us to share tips, practice information, news and event updates with other social media users. You are welcome to “like” or “follow” our social media feeds and read or share articles we post. However, because social media sites are public spaces, anyone can see you post or comment on our social media page and is not private. In addition, when you post, comment, or “like” a page, it will be published on your page as well. Your privacy is our primary concern and therefore, we ask you to use your own discretion in choosing whether to follow our agency and/or posting any comments on social media. Please note that airing grievances is best done through reaching out to your therapist, Clinical Director or other administrative personnel, as it is difficult for us to address your concerns and help due to privacy concerns when it is done on social media.

Friending

In order to maintain ethical boundaries, we are not permitted to accept friends or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn, etc.). Ethical standards and best practices require that clear boundaries remain in the social media realm, that would exist in the non-digital world. In order to respect your privacy, confidentiality and maintain clear *professional* boundaries, The Family Connection staff will not be allowed to add clients (current or former) as friends or contacts on social media sites and commit to not viewing your online social media presence, unless you specifically bring your social media into your scheduled treatment session. If there are things from your online life that you wish to share with your provider, please bring them into session where those things can be viewed and explored in a safe place. If you have any questions about this, please bring them up with your providers or you can discuss it with one of our Clinical Directors.

Emails, Cell Phones, Computers and Faxes are NOT private

No form of client communication is 100 percent guaranteed to be private. Conversations can be overheard, e-mails can be sent to the wrong recipients and phone conversations can be listened to by others. But in today’s age of e-mail, Facebook, Twitter and other social media, therapists have to be more aware than ever of the ethical pitfalls they can fall into by using these types of communication.

Although they add convenience and expedite communication, it is very important to be aware that computers and e-mail and cell phone communication can be accessed relatively easily by unauthorized people and hence can compromise the privacy and confidentiality of such communication. E-mails, in



particular, are vulnerable to such unauthorized access due to the fact that servers have unlimited and direct access to all e-mails that go through them. Although we are exploring various encryption software programs to protect your privacy, our emails and data on our computers may not be encrypted, it is always a possibility that e-mails and faxes can be sent to the wrong address, and computers, including laptops, may be stolen. Our agency computers are equipped with a firewall, virus protection and passwords, and we also password-protect and back up all confidential information from our computers on a regular basis. If you need to cancel or change an appointment time please call our front desk and leave a message, if no one is able to pick up, as that is the most efficient and frequently checked mode of communication regarding appointments. Our automated system does generate reminder calls, emails and/or text messages to remind you of your appointment(s) as a courtesy, if you desire such support. However, please keep in mind that these automated reminders are vulnerable to someone having unauthorized access by having access to your cell phone, email account, etc. Please remember to update The Family Connection immediately if you have a change in phone number, email, etc. to limit the risk of information being sent to an old contact.

If you communicate confidential or private information via SMS (text) or e-mail, we will assume that you have made an informed decision, will view it as your agreement to take the risk that such communication may be intercepted, and we will honor your desire to communicate on such matters via email. Please do not use e-mail or faxes for emergencies. Due to computer or network problems, e-mails may not be deliverable, and we may not check our e-mails or faxes daily.

The Family Connection prefers that appointment scheduling and modifications be done with either your clinician, in person during the course of treatment, or with our administrative team, to decrease potential errors and limit potential miscommunication. If you e-mail your clinician related to your therapy sessions, please note that e-mail is not completely secure or confidential. **If e-mail communication outside of therapy requires more than 5 minutes to read and respond to, you may be charged for professional services rendered in 15 minute increments. Please indicate if you intend to pay these charges, or we will wait to respond until your appointment time, to clarify your expectations and needs.** Please do not send forwarded messages, regardless of how inspirational they may seem to our professional e-mail addresses. We use e-mail for work related issues and do not want to risk viruses spread by forwarded e-mails.

If you choose to communicate with The Family Connection or anyone on our team, via e-mail, be aware that all e-mails are retained in the logs of your and our 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(s). You should also know that any emails we receive from you and any responses that are sent to you become part of your patient chart and may be revealed in cases where your records are summoned by a legal entity.

SOCIAL MEDIA SHOULD BE CONSIDERED PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc. is not secure. It could compromise your confidentiality to use Wall postings, @ replies, or other means of engaging with The Family Connection and/or its staff online if an already established client/therapist relationship has been established. It may also create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your legal medical record and will need to be documented and archived in your chart. The Family Connection and/or its staff may not read these messages in a timely fashion. If you need to contact The Family Connection and/or its clinical staff between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone at (505) 717-1155 and leave a message for admin, if the call is not immediately answered, as this is monitored frequently during business hours.

WWW.NMFamilyConnection.com

(505) 717-1155



FRIENDING MAY EXPOSE OUR PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP AND UNDERMINE YOUR PRIVACY:

This social network policy services as your notification that being linked as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. As in any other public context, you have control over your own description of the nature of our acquaintance, if you chose to disclose a professional relationship. For example, if you were seen at church by an employee of The Family Connection, they would ignore you but if you initiated contact, they would follow your lead. If you introduced the employee to your friends, they would agree with your description of how you met. Employees of The Family Connection will not confirm nor deny any professional relationship between the staff and clients on any social network sites. We reserve the right to discontinue any social network connections without prior notification and we encourage you to do these same. We discourage the use of social networking sites for any communication about the therapeutic relationship, due to the lack of privacy protections.

In addition, viewing your online activities without your consent and without explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially have negative influence on your treatment relationship. If there are things from your online life that you wish to share with your treating clinician, please bring them into session where you can view and explore them together, during the therapy hour. The current treatment agreement states that your patient information is kept private and will not be shared with others unless there is reason to believe that the patient or another individual is at risk, or compelled by a court of law. It is easy to forget that when we type names into a search engine or a field on a social network, we are also sharing information with others. If you have questions about this, please bring them up during treatment and you can discuss them with your provider during the treatment session.

LOCATION-BASED SERVICES REVEAL YOUR LOCATION:

If you use location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. We do not place our practice as a check-in location on various sites such as Foursquare, Gowalla, Loopt, etc. However, if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise that you are a therapy client due to regular check-ins at my office on a consistent basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in” from our office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

WE DO NOT USE SEARCH ENGINES TO LEARN ABOUT YOU:

It is NOT a regular part of our practice to search for clients on Google or Facebook or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions *may* be made during times of crisis. If we have reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with your clinician via the usual means (coming to appointments, phone or email) there *might* be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if we ever resort to such means, your clinician will fully document it and discuss it with you when you meet next.

BUSINESS REVIEW SITES ARE INEFFECTIVE PLACES TO VOICE YOUR COMPLAINTS:

You may find our counseling agency on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Yahoo, Psychotherapy Networker, TherapySite, Google, 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 regarding of whether the business has added itself to the site. If you should find



my listing on any of these sites, please know that my listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as our client. Of course, you have the right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, I cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. We urge you to take your own privacy as seriously as we take our commitment to confidentiality to you. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with me about your feelings about our work, there is a good possibility it will not be seen by your provider.

During your work at The Family Connection it is our hope that you will bring your feelings and reactions to our work directly into the therapy process. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide that your connection with your provider is not a good fit. If you decide that it is not a good fit, please know that you can always follow up with our Clinical Directors, to have another provider assigned to your case and/or discuss any feedback you may have. In addition, we provide the opportunity for feedback anonymously through patient surveys available at the reception area and quarterly surveys conducted agency wide. None of this is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in therapy or with our agency but to share with you that confidentiality means that we cannot tell others that you are a client. The regulations and Ethics Codes that govern our professional licenses guide our interactions and prohibit various activities, including prohibiting your clinician from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that you are receiving counseling services and who your provider is and how you feel about the treatment you are being provided, in any forum of your choosing.

If you do choose to write something on a business review sites, we hope that you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. We urge you to create a pseudonym that is not linked to your regular e-mail address or friend networks for your own privacy and protection.

If you do feel like something has been done that is harmful or unethical, and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with us, you can always contact the New Mexico Counseling and Therapy Practice Board, which oversees licensing and they will review the services we provide.

New Mexico Counseling and Therapy Practice Board
2550 Cerrillos Road
Santa Fe, NM 87505 (505)
476-4610

CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to review our Social Media Policy. If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, do bring them to our attention so that we can discuss them.