

## **BIRCH PSYCHOLOGY PRIVACY POLICY**

Here at Birch Psychology (and at [birchpsychology.com.au](http://birchpsychology.com.au)), we are committed to upholding the privacy and confidentiality of our clients' and website users' personal information.

Birch Psychology adheres at all times to the Australian National Privacy Principles set out in the *Privacy Act (1988)* (henceforth 'Privacy Act') and the Australian Psychological Society's *Code of Ethics (2007)* in the provision of psychological services and when handling personal data and information. This page details Birch Psychology's privacy policy for the management of client information in compliance with the aforementioned requirements.

### **CLIENT INFORMATION & COLLECTION**

During the provision of our psychological services, we collect and store client information comprising of personal details (including your name, email address, date of birth, contact number), emergency contact details, Medicare details, billing details (including credit card details), referral information, correspondence from referrers and other interested parties, assessment results, reports, case notes, and other information relevant to the service provided. Where appropriate and clinically indicative, we will also collect sensitive client health information such as medical history and medication schedules.

Client information is gathered through enquiries submitted through our website, authorised third parties (e.g., GP, lawyer, allied health service provider), intake and/or consent forms, and correspondence received by our employees or psychologists via telephone, email, writing, or in-person. We may also collect de-identified client information through our website including browser and device details, and IP address.

### **SECURITY & STORAGE**

We are committed to ensuring the security and privacy of client information and in so doing take reasonable steps to protect the information from misuse, loss, or unwarranted disclosure by maintaining up to date security measures.

Client information is stored in three ways: in a secure electronic cloud-based practice management software, in an internal electronic cloud-based server, and/or in a locked filing cabinet on our premises. Client information can only be accessed by authorised employees who are aware of, and bound to, the Privacy Act and this policy. Administration staff have access to all client information excluding session case notes which each treating practitioner is responsible for storing securely.

### **USE OF CLIENT INFORMATION**

Your personal information is collected and used for providing and documenting the psychological service we provide. Client information is used solely for the purposes for which it was originally collected, or for reasons associated with its original collection purposes, unless stated otherwise within this policy or at the time of collection. This includes administrative purposes such as arranging appointments, taking payments, communication purposes, facilitating correspondence between your treating psychologist and referrer (or other interested party).

Correspondence gathered from our website, that may include personal information, is archivally stored for record-keeping purposes only.

Unless encrypted on our electronic practice management software, billing details are only collected and retained for the time necessary to facilitate over-the-phone payments, after which point, they are destroyed and disposed of.

Your de-identified personal information may be used by us to create our own internal marketing and engagement statistics, identify client demand, assist our clients's needs, and improve our services.

## **DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Under the following circumstances, we may be required to disclose your personal information:

- To adhere with a legal requirement or if subpoenaed by a court.
- Where failing to disclose personal information, according to the professional judgement of your treating psychologist, would pose a serious risk to yours, or another person's, life, health, or safety.
- After obtaining your informed consent we may disclose your personal information to provide a letter or report to another service provider or organisation (e.g., General Practitioner, Specialist Physician, Allied Health Professional, Lawyer, Authorised Third Party), to discuss or share some personal information with someone else (e.g., parent, family member, carer, employer), or to disclose information in another way (e.g., e-mail, in writing).
- We will disclose personal information to protect the rights, property, or safety of Birch Psychology's employees, associates, clients, or third parties.

## **CHOOSING NOT TO DISCLOSE PERSONAL INFORMATION**

While you are not obliged to provide us with your personal information, not doing so may impact our ability to provide our psychological services to you.

## **HOW LONG WE RETAIN YOUR DATA**

Psychologists must retain adult client information for 7-years after the client's last session and until child and adolescent clients reach 25 years old. Once it is no longer necessary to retain client information, the psychologist will permanently delete client information from our secure cloud-based practice management software and paper files will be shredded on-site.

## **THIRD PARTIES**

We will not disclose or sell your personal information to third parties without your informed consent. We do not disclose client information to third parties except in the event that such disclosure provides necessary information to services you are engaged with, granted we have obtained your prior informed consent.

## **COOKIES**

We use cookies to analyse web traffic and ensure a personalised user experience of our website. Cookies are small files sent from a website and stored on your browser. While cookies collect information regarding your web browsing use, they do not access information stored on your computer or any personal information that could identify you. While most web browsers automatically accept cookies, you are able to reject cookies via your browser settings. Rejecting cookies may impact your experience of our website.

## **LINKS**

Our website may include links to third party websites. We include these links for your interest only and they do not represent our sponsorship or endorsement of the third party websites. We are not responsible for the privacy practices of other websites and we encourage you to review the privacy policy of websites you visit through links embedded within our site.

## **EMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS**

Should you submit your personal information to us by way of employment application, it will be handled and stored securely and used only for the purposes in which it was obtained (e.g., contacting you regarding potential employment).

## **CHANGES TO OUR PRIVACY POLICY**

Occasionally, it will be necessary for us to modify our privacy policy in light of new laws, guidelines, technologies, and/or changes to our own procedures. All updates to our privacy policy will be effective immediately and all personal information we hold will be handled according to our most recent privacy policy. The most current version of our privacy policy will be posted to our website and we encourage you to regularly revisit our site for updates.

## **REQUESTS TO RELEASE CLIENT INFORMATION**

You may request the release of your personal information to another practitioner or interested party. Your psychologist will review your request and in most cases release your information accordingly, taking into account any legal or ethical considerations. We will ask you to complete a transfer of records consent form and standard service fee charges may apply to account for time necessary to prepare your file and any accompanying letters or reports.

## **ACCESS & ACCURACY**

You may request access to any personal information we hold about you by writing to us. Your treating psychologist will review your request and we will endeavour to respond to you in a timely manner. In most circumstances you will be provided access to the personal information, including health information, we hold about you, except where legal or ethical requirements prevent us from doing so.

Similarly, you may change or amend your personal details at any time by advising us in writing, via email, over the phone, or in person.

## **CONTACT US**

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints regarding our privacy policy or wish to discuss the use of your personal information, please contact us on 03 8592 1954 or [info@birchpsychology.com.au](mailto:info@birchpsychology.com.au) and we will endeavour to respond to your enquiry in a timely manner.

For further information regarding your privacy, please visit: [www.privacy.gov.au](http://www.privacy.gov.au).

*Our privacy policy was last updated and published on 02 April 2022.*