



AGREEMENT REGARDING MINOR CHILDREN

Groff & Associates believes that the involvement of children and adolescents in therapy can be highly beneficial to their overall development. Very often, it is best to see them with parents and other family members; sometimes though, they are best seen alone. As mental health professionals, our role is to assess which might be in the best interest of the child and make recommendations to you. The support of the child's caregivers is essential, as well as your understanding of the basic procedures involved in counseling children.

As mental health professionals, Groff & Associates will not become involved in legal disputes or other official proceedings unless compelled to do so by a court of law.

Matters involving custodial issues and mediation are best handled by another professional who is specially trained in those areas rather than by the child's therapist.

The issue of confidentiality is critical in treating children. When children are seen with adults, what is discussed is known to those present and should be kept confidential except by mutual agreement. Children seen in individual sessions (except under certain conditions) are not legally entitled to confidentiality (also called privilege) -- their parents have this right. *However, unless children feel they have some privacy in speaking with a therapist, the benefits of therapy may be lost. Therefore, it is necessary to work out an arrangement in which children feel that their privacy is generally being respected, at the same time that parents have access to critical information.*

In the following circumstances, children are entitled to privacy while parent or legal guardians have a legal right to information as necessary:

1. Confidentiality and privilege are limited in cases involving child abuse, neglect, molestation, or danger to self or others. In these cases, the therapist is required to make an official report to the appropriate agency.
2. Minors may independently enter into therapy and claim the privilege of confidentiality in cases involving abuse or severe neglect, molestation, pregnancy, or communicable diseases and when they are married or officially emancipated. They may seek therapy independently for substance abuse, danger to self or others, or a mental disorder, but parents must be involved unless doing so would harm the child.
3. Any evaluation, treatment, or reports ordered by, or done for, submission to a third party--such as a court or a school; is not entirely confidential and will be shared with that agency with your specific written permission. Please also note that **Groff & Associates** does not have control over information once it is released to a third party.



The following is a specific agreement between you and your child/children:

I agree that my/our child/children (please print name(s)):

- 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____
4) _____ 5) _____ 6) _____

should have privacy in his/her/their therapy sessions and I agree to allow this privacy except in extreme situations, which I will discuss with the therapist. At the same time, except under unusual circumstances, I understand that I have a legal right to obtain this information.

I will do my best to ensure that therapy sessions are attended and will not inquire about the content of the sessions. If my child prefers/children prefer not to volunteer information about the sessions, I will respect his/her/their right not to disclose details. Basically, unless my child has/children have been abused or is/are in clear danger to self or others, the therapist will normally tell me only the following:

1. Whether sessions are attended.
2. Whether or not my child is/children are participating.
3. Whether or not progress is generally being made.

The normal procedure for discussing issues that are in my child's/children's therapy may be joint sessions including my child/children, the therapist, and me and perhaps other appropriate adults. If I believe there is any significant health or safety issues that I need to know about, I will contact the therapist and attempt to arrange a session with my child/children present. Similarly, when the therapist determines that there are significant issues that should be discussed with parents every effort will be made to schedule a session involving the parents and the child/children. I understand that if information becomes known to the therapist and has a significant bearing on the child's/children's well-being, the therapist will work with the person providing the information to ensure that both parents are aware of it. In other words, the therapist will not divulge secrets except as mandated by law, but may encourage the individual who has the information to disclose it for therapy to continue effectively.

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

Printed Name of Parent/Legal Guardian

Date