

# Positive Perspectives Counseling Center

## Social Media Policy 2019

*This document outlines our office policies related to use of Social Media. Please read it to understand how we conduct ourselves on the Internet as mental health professionals, and how you can expect your PPInc. therapist or counselor to respond to communication that may occur on the Internet. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when we need to update this policy. If we do so, we will offer a copy of the updated policy on our website at [positiveperspectivescounseling.com](http://positiveperspectivescounseling.com).*

**ALERT! COMMUNICATION VIA CELL PHONES, COMPUTERS AND FAXES ARE NOT PRIVATE OR CONFIDENTIAL.** Indeed, no form of client communication is 100% guaranteed to be private. In-person conversations can be overheard, e-mails and texts can be sent to the wrong recipients, and phone conversations can be listened to by others. But in today's age of e-mail, texts, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and other social media, counselors and clients have to be more aware than ever of the ethical pitfalls when using these types of communication.

Although all of these options add convenience and expedite communication, it is very important to be aware that e-mails, and texts are vulnerable to unauthorized access due to the fact that servers have unlimited and direct access to all e-mails that go through them. Be aware that all e-mails as well as texts can be retained in the logs of your and our practice's 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. In addition, it is difficult to verify who is actually sending or receiving a text.

If you use location-based services on your mobile phone or 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 our office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally "checking in" from a PPInc. office or if you have a passive LBS application enabled on your phone.

**SOCIAL MEDIA SHOULD BE CONSIDERED PUBLIC COMMUNICATION; "FRIENDING" IS UNETHICAL FOR YOUR COUNSELOR TO DO BECAUSE, AMONG OTHER POSSIBLE HARMS, IT MAY EXPOSE YOU AS A CLIENT AND UNDERMINE YOUR PRIVACY:** Messaging, wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with your therapist on social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat or LinkedIn could expose the nature of your relationship with your PPInc. therapist and compromise your confidentiality. Regardless, your PPInc. counselor will not confirm nor deny any professional relationship between themselves and Clients on any social network sites. For your protection, your therapist may reserve the right to refuse or discontinue any social network connection, without prior notification. Further, we discourage the use of social network sites for any communication about your therapeutic relationship, including scheduling issues, due to the lack of privacy protections.

**WE DO NOT USE SEARCH ENGINES TO LEARN ABOUT YOU:** It is NOT a regular part of PPInc. practice to search for Clients on social media or search engines. Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis. If your therapist has a reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch (coming to appointments, phone, etc.) 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 very unusual situations.

Casual viewing of Clients' online content outside of the therapy hour can create confusion in regard to whether it is being done as a part of your treatment. In addition, viewing your online activities without your consent or without our explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially influence your working relationship with your therapist. If there are things from your online life that you wish to share with your counselor, please bring them into your sessions where you can view and explore them together, during the therapy hour.

***Some of the relevant ethical codes considered in our social media policy are:***

- *therapists do not disclose client confidences except by written authorization or waiver, or where mandated or permitted by law.*
- *Verbal authorization will not be sufficient except in emergency situations, unless prohibited by law.*
- *When providing couple, family or group treatment, the therapist does not disclose information outside the treatment context without a written authorization from each individual competent to execute a waiver.*
- *Therapists are aware of their influential positions with respect to clients, and they avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such*

*persons. Therapists, therefore, make every effort to avoid conditions and multiple relationships with clients that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. Such relationships include, but are not limited to, business or close personal relationships with a client or the client's immediate family. When the risk of impairment or exploitation exists due to conditions or multiple roles, therapists take appropriate precautions.*

**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A LEGAL RECORD:** You should also know that any e-mails or texts your therapist receives from you and any responses that he or she sends to you become a part of your legal record and may be revealed in cases where your records are summoned by a legal entity. If e-mail or text communication outside of therapy requires more than five (5) minutes to read and respond to, your therapist may charge for their professional services rendered in 10-minute increments.

**FINALLY, SOCIAL MEDIA BUSINESS REVIEW SITES ARE INEFFECTIVE PLACES TO VOICE YOUR COMPLAINTS:** You may find Positive Perspectives Counseling Center on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Yahoo Local, Bing, 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 regardless of whether the business has added itself to the site. If you should find PPInc. listings on any of these sites, please know that the listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as a Client of PPInc. Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, we urge you to take your own privacy as seriously as we take our commitment of confidentiality to you. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with your therapist about your feelings, there is a good possibility that he or she may never see it.

**PPINC. PREFERRED COMMUNICATION:** We prefer to use our telephone/voicemail system to arrange or modify appointments. If you need to cancel or change an appointment, please leave a message on our voicemail system and your phone call will be returned promptly.

**Regardless of your counselor's personal social media policy, please do not use texts, e-mail or faxes for emergencies. Due to computer or network problems or other human error, these may not be delivered or received, and may not be checked daily.**

### **Acknowledgement of Review of PPINC. Social Media Policy\***

I acknowledge that if I communicate confidential information via text or e-mail to my therapist, I have made an informed decision, and agree to take the risk that such communication may be intercepted. I will notify PPInc. if I decide to avoid or limit, in any way, the use of e-mails, texts, faxes, or storage of confidential information on PPInc. computers.

*By signing below, I am indicating that I have read this document, understand my rights as a Client, and accept the responsibility as stated. I have been offered a printed copy of this PPInc. Social Media Policy and all questions regarding these policies have been answered to my satisfaction.*

Print Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Therapist Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign Therapist Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*This document is also available at [www.positiveperspectivescounseling.com](http://www.positiveperspectivescounseling.com).