



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Welcome

Welcome to The Family Center. We are dedicated to providing comprehensive, compassionate, and effective mental health care to children, adolescents, adults, and families. Our clinicians use a collaborative approach to treatment, working with patients and families to establish goals, explore treatment options, and develop practical solutions.

Services may include psychotherapy, psychiatric evaluation and medication management, family work, parent support, consultation, school-related services, psychological or psychoeducational assessment, and other services when clinically appropriate. Your clinician will discuss recommendations with you and answer questions about your evaluation or treatment.

Contacting The Family Center

You may contact our friendly administrative team at **410-531-5087** or send a message through the **Insync patient portal**.

Messages are reviewed during weekday business hours, and we generally respond to routine messages within one business day. Please note that providers may only return calls when they are in the office. If you need a more timely response, please contact our front desk, and we will be happy to assist you.

For emergencies, do not rely on voicemail, email, text messaging, or the patient portal. If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency or believe that you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

Please notify the office promptly if your address, telephone number, email address, emergency contact, or other important contact information changes. This helps us communicate appointment reminders and other necessary information.

Email, Text Messaging, and Electronic Communication

Electronic communication is convenient but may not be completely secure, private, or reliable. Email and text messaging should not be used for emergencies or urgent clinical concerns. Appointment cancellations and urgent messages should be communicated by telephone/voicemail rather than email or text. The Family Center cannot guarantee that electronic communications will be delivered without delay, interception, alteration, or technical problems.

If you choose to communicate with your clinician by email, understand that messages sent or received may become part of your clinical record when clinically relevant.

Your clinician may determine the appropriate method of electronic communication based on clinical and privacy considerations.

Appointments

Your appointment time is reserved specifically for you. Please arrive or connect on time. If you arrive late, the session may need to be shortened so that the clinician can remain on schedule for other patients. While we send courtesy text reminders for upcoming appointments, patients are responsible for keeping track of and attending their scheduled appointments.

Telehealth and Telephone Sessions

The Family Center offers both in-person and telehealth appointments. Telehealth appointments are conducted through a HIPAA-compliant platform when clinically appropriate. Telephone sessions may be offered in limited circumstances at the clinician's discretion.

For telehealth appointments, you are responsible for being in a location where your clinician is legally permitted to provide care at the time of the appointment. If you are in another state or location where your clinician cannot provide care, the appointment may need to be cancelled or rescheduled and the applicable cancellation policy may apply.

While most insurers are likely to cover telemedicine sessions, please be aware that the procedure codes for the telemedicine or phone sessions are different than for an in-office appointment and insurance coverage may not be available depending on your particular plan. Please clarify this in advance with your insurance carrier.

Cancellations and Missed Appointments

We require at least 24 *business* hours' notice (Monday through Friday only) to cancel or reschedule an appointment in order to avoid the applicable late-cancellation or missed-appointment fee. Because appointment times are reserved for you, missed appointments and late cancellations are charged at the full scheduled rate. Please contact the office by telephone or voicemail as soon as possible if an unexpected circumstance prevents you from attending.

Fees and Payment

The Family Center is a fee-for-service practice. Fees are due in full at the time services are provided unless a different arrangement has been approved in advance. A credit card may be kept securely on file for payment of services, balances, late-cancellation/missed-appointment fees, and other charges authorized under these policies. Patients are responsible for keeping payment information current and for notifying the office when card information changes.

We will provide a receipt or superbill for patients who wish to seek reimbursement from their insurance company. The Family Center does not guarantee that an insurance company will reimburse any portion of the fee.

Patients are responsible for any returned-payment, chargeback, or other payment-processing fees that are legally permitted and applicable. Accounts that remain past due may be subject to collection efforts, consistent with applicable law and privacy requirements. Only the minimum necessary information will be disclosed when permitted or required for collection.

Services Outside the Scheduled Appointment

Clinical care sometimes requires work outside the scheduled session. This may include reviewing records, completing forms, preparing letters or reports, communicating with schools or other professionals, attending school meetings, participating in legal proceedings, or other requested services. When a separate fee applies, the clinician or office will communicate the fee or rate before the service whenever reasonably possible. Time spent on these services may be billed in increments consistent with the practice's current fee schedule.

Medicare or Medicaid

Please note that we do not participate with these plans and patients seen at the Family Center **cannot** submit our receipts to these companies for reimbursement.

Additionally, Medicaid will not allow non-participating provider prescriptions to be filled through its insurance plan at the pharmacy (which means you would have to pay out of pocket for the medications).

Confidentiality and Its Limits

Information shared during treatment and information contained in your clinical record are treated as confidential and are protected by applicable federal and state privacy laws. Information generally will not be released to another person or organization without appropriate authorization, except when disclosure is permitted or required by law.

Important exceptions may include circumstances involving suspected abuse or neglect, serious or imminent threats of harm to the patient or another person, certain court orders or legal processes, health oversight or other disclosures required by law, and other circumstances permitted by applicable law. The exact limits of confidentiality may vary by situation and by the patient's age and legal status.

The Family Center may share the minimum necessary information with members of the treatment team and administrative staff when needed for clinical care, scheduling, billing, quality assurance, or other permitted practice operations. Staff members are expected to protect patient privacy.

Minors and Parents/Guardians

For patients who are minors, confidentiality and parental/guardian access to information are governed by applicable law and the circumstances of treatment. Parents/guardians should understand that adolescents may need an appropriate degree of privacy to support effective treatment, while parents/guardians may have legal rights to certain information. Your clinician will discuss confidentiality expectations and limits with the patient and parent/guardian when appropriate.

Before sharing information with a parent/guardian or another involved person, the clinician may discuss the request with the minor patient when clinically appropriate, while complying with applicable law and safety requirements.

Clinical Records and Patient Rights

The Family Center maintains clinical and billing records as required by law and professional standards. Patients may request access to their records in accordance with applicable law and the practice's procedures. You may request access to your clinical record in writing.

Prescription Refills and Medication Management

This section applies to patients receiving psychiatric medication management. For any minors taking medications, an adult needs to be available to consent at the appointment. Minors must be present for at least part of the sessions.

Refill requests should be submitted through front desk only (we do not accept refill requests through pharmacies). Please allow at least 48 business hours for refill requests. Pharmacies and insurance companies may require additional time for prior authorizations or other processing. Controlled medications are subject to additional federal and state requirements.

Refills may require an appointment, may have additional restrictions, and are handled at the prescriber's discretion and in accordance with applicable law. If you are overdue for follow-up, please schedule a follow-up otherwise the medication refill cannot be authorized.

Though our providers can try to guide you in-between visits through online patient portal messages, setting up regular appointments is very important. If you need any medication advice or adjustment, please call the front desk for an appointment. If you are unable to wait to discuss your concerns, we can arrange a phone consultation (charged at provider's discretion).

Termination of Treatment / Inactive Charts

Treatment may end when the patient and clinician mutually agree that goals have been met, when another level of care is more appropriate, or when continued treatment is otherwise no longer clinically appropriate.

Patients who have not been seen for approximately 90 days, or within another mutually agreed-upon follow-up interval, may be considered inactive and the clinical relationship may be closed. Patients who wish to return may contact the office to request availability; reactivation or a new evaluation may be required depending on the circumstances.

Social Media and Online Boundaries

Protecting privacy and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries are central to the therapeutic relationship.

The Family Center clinicians do not accept current or former patients as friends or connections on personal social-networking accounts. Please do not contact clinicians through social-media direct messages, public posts, comments, @mentions, or similar online interactions regarding your treatment. These sites are not secure and these messages may not be read in a timely fashion. If you choose to follow a clinician's professional or educational public account, please understand that doing so may create an observable connection and could affect privacy. Engaging with us this way could compromise your confidentiality and become part of your legal medical record, archived in your chart. The Family Center does not provide emergency care through social media or electronic messaging. Patients should also avoid posting identifying information about their treatment or clinician in public forums if they wish to protect their privacy.

If you see something online that you would like to discuss in treatment, please bring it into your session so it can be addressed in an appropriate clinical setting.

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

This Notice describes how protected health information (PHI) about you may be used and disclosed and how you may obtain access to that information. The Family Center is required to maintain the privacy of your PHI, provide you with this Notice, and follow the privacy practices described in it, subject to applicable federal and state law.

How We May Use and Disclose Your PHI

Treatment

We may use or disclose PHI as necessary to provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and related services. This may include communicating with other health care professionals involved in your care when permitted or authorized.

Payment

We may use and disclose PHI as necessary to obtain payment for services and to maintain billing and financial records. Because The Family Center is a fee-for-service practice, this may include providing documentation to a patient or insurer when the patient requests a superbill or seeks reimbursement.

Health Care Operations

We may use or disclose PHI as necessary for permitted practice operations, including scheduling, quality activities, staff functions, compliance, and administrative activities.

Appointment Reminders and Communications

We may use contact information to remind you about appointments, communicate about services, and respond to your requests. You may request reasonable alternative methods or locations for confidential communications.

Business Associates

We may share PHI with vendors or other business associates that perform services for the practice when permitted by law and when appropriate safeguards are in place.

People Involved in Your Care

When permitted by law, we may disclose limited information to a family member, close friend, or other person you identify when that person is involved in your care or payment for care. We may also disclose information when necessary to assist with disaster relief or to notify a person responsible for your care of your location or general condition.

Other Permitted or Required Disclosures

We may use or disclose PHI without your separate written authorization when permitted or required by applicable law. Examples may include:

- When required by law.
- For certain public health activities.
- For health oversight activities such as audits or investigations.
- To report suspected abuse or neglect when required or permitted by law.
- For certain legal proceedings or lawful requests, subject to applicable requirements and protections.
- For certain law-enforcement purposes when legally permitted or required.
- To coroners, medical examiners, or funeral directors when legally permitted.

For certain research activities when applicable legal and institutional requirements are met.
To prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to health or safety when permitted by law.
For workers' compensation and certain specialized government functions when authorized by law.
To the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services when required for compliance investigations.

Other uses and disclosures will be made only with your written authorization when authorization is required. You may revoke an authorization in writing to the extent permitted by law, except where action has already been taken in reliance on the authorization.

Uses and Disclosures Requiring Your Authorization

Certain uses and disclosures generally require written authorization under federal law. These may include many uses of psychotherapy notes, marketing communications, and the sale of PHI. If an authorization is required, you will have the opportunity to review and sign the authorization before the disclosure is made.

Our Responsibilities

- We are required by law to maintain the privacy and security of your PHI.
- We will notify you as required by law if a breach occurs that may have compromised the privacy or security of your information.
- We will follow the privacy practices described in this Notice and provide you with a copy upon request.
- We will not use or disclose your information other than as described here or as otherwise permitted or required by law unless you provide written authorization when authorization is required.

Changes to This Notice

The Family Center reserves the right to change the terms of this Notice and make the revised Notice applicable to PHI we already maintain, as permitted by law. You may request the current Notice at any time.



PATIENT ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Policies, Procedures & Notice of Privacy Practices

Consent and Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed The Family Center's Policies and Procedures and Notice of Privacy Practices. I understand that these documents explain important information about contacting the practice, appointments, telehealth, fees and payment, confidentiality, records, prescription refills, social media, and privacy practices.

I understand that these policies may be updated from time to time and that I may ask my clinician or the office questions about them.

I understand that this acknowledgment does not guarantee a particular treatment outcome and does not replace individualized clinical recommendations or informed consent for specific treatment.

Signature or Patient or Parent/Guardian: _____

Patient Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name and Relationship to patient (if applicable): _____