



maximum
independence
a bphealth clinic

Privacy of personal information is an important principal to Maximum Independence, Inc. We are committed to collecting, using and disclosing personal information responsibly and only to the extent necessary for the goods and services we provide. We also try to be open and transparent as to how we handle personal information. This document describes our privacy policies.

WHAT IS PERSONAL INFORMATION?

Personal information is information about an identifiable individual. Personal information includes information that relates to their personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, income, home and address or phone number, ethnic background, family status), their health (e.g., health history, health conditions, health services received by them) or their activities and views (e.g., religion, politics, opinions expressed by an individual, an opinion or evaluation of an individual). Personal information is to be contrasted with *business information* (e.g., *an individual's business address and telephone number*), which is not protected by privacy legislation.

WHO WE ARE

Our organization, Maximum Independence, Inc., includes five Occupational Therapists, one Occupational Therapy Assistant and four administrative staff.

We use a number of consultants and agencies that may, in the course of their duties, have limited access to personal information we hold. These include *lawyers, contractors of disability services and goods, retailers of assistive devices and aids, office cleaners...* We also have their assurance that they follow appropriate privacy principals

WE COLLECT PERSONAL INFORMATION

PRIMARY PURPOSES:

About Clients

Like all occupational therapy service providers, we collect, use and disclose personal information in order to serve our clients. For our clients, the primary purpose for collecting personal information is to provide occupational therapy treatment. *For example, we collect information about a client's health history, including their family history, physical condition and function and social situation in order to help us assess what their health needs are, to advise them of their options and then to provide the health care they choose to have. A secondary primary purpose is to obtain a baseline of health and social information so that in providing ongoing health services we can identify changes/improvements that are occurring over time. It would be rare for us to collect such information without the client's express consent, but this might occur in an emergency (e.g., the client is unconscious) or where we believe that client would consent if asked and it is impractical to obtain consent (e.g., a family member passing a message on from our client and we have no reason to believe that the message is not genuine).*

About Contract Staff, Volunteers and Students

For people who are contracted to do work for us (e.g., temporary workers), our primary purpose for collecting personal information is to ensure we can contact them in the future (e.g., for new assignments) and for necessary work-related communication (e.g., sending out paycheques, year-end tax receipts). Examples of the type of personal information we collect for those purposes include home addresses and phone numbers. It is rare for us to collect such information without prior consent, but it might in the case of a health emergency or to investigate a possible breach of law (e.g., if a theft were to occur in the clinic). If contract staff, volunteers or students wish a letter or reference or an evaluation, we will collect information about their work related performance and provide a report as authorized by them.

RELATED AND SECONDARY PURPOSES:

Like most organizations, we also collect, use and disclose information for purposes related to or secondary to our primary purposes. The most common examples of our related and secondary purposes are as follows:

To advise clients that their product or service should be reviewed (e.g., to ensure a product is still functioning properly and appropriate for their then current needs and to consider modifications or replacement).

Occupational therapists are regulated by the College of Occupational Therapist of Ontario who may inspect our records and interview our staff as a part of their regulatory activities in the public interest. In addition, as professionals, we will report serious misconduct, incompetence or incapacity of other practitioners, whether they belong to other organizations or our own. Also, our organization believes that it should report information suggesting serious illegal behaviour to the authorities. External regulators have their own strict privacy obligations. Sometimes these reports include personal information about our clients, or other individuals, to support the concern (e.g., improper services). Also, like all organizations, various government agencies (e.g., Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Human Rights Commission, etc.) have the authority to review our files and interview our staff as a part of their mandates. In these circumstances, we may consult with professionals (e.g., lawyers, accountants) who will investigate the matter and report back to us.

Clients or other individuals we deal with may have questions about our goods or services after they have been received. We also provide ongoing services for many of our clients over a period of months or years for which our previous records are helpful. We retain our client information for a minimum of ten years after the last contact to enable us to respond to those questions and provide these services (our regulatory College also requires us to retain our client records).

PROTECTING PERSONAL INFORMATION

We understand the importance of protecting personal information. For that reason, we have taken the following steps:

Paper information is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area.

Electronic hardware is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area at all times. In addition, passwords are used on all computers.

Paper information is transmitted through sealed, addressed envelopes or boxes by reputable companies.

Electronic information is transmitted either through a direct line or is anonymized or encrypted.

Staff are trained to collect, use and disclose personal information only as necessary to fulfill their duties and in accordance with our privacy policy.

External consultants and agencies with access to personal information must enter into privacy agreements with us.

RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

We need to retain personal information for some time to ensure that we can answer any questions you might have about the services provided and for our own accountability to external regulatory bodies. However, we do not want to keep personal information too long in order to protect your privacy.

We keep our client files for ten years. Our client and contact directories are much more difficult to systematically destroy, so we remove such information when we can if it does not appear that we will be contacting you again. However, if you ask, we will remove such contact information immediately.

We destroy paper files containing personal information by shredding. We destroy electronic information by deleting it and, when the hardware is discarded, we ensure that the hard drive is physically destroyed. Alternatively, we may send some or all of the client file to our client.

YOU CAN LOOK AT YOUR INFORMATION

With only a few exceptions, you have the right to see what personal information we hold about you. Often all you have to do is ask. We can help you identify what records we might have about you. We will also try to help you understand any information you do not understand (e.g., short form, technical language, etc.). We will need to confirm your identity, if we do not know you, before providing you with this access. We reserve the right to charge a fee for such requests.

If there is a problem we may ask you to put your request in writing. If we cannot give you access, we will tell you within 30 days if at all possible and tell you the reason, as best we can, as to why we cannot give you access.

If you believe there is a mistake in the information, you have the right to ask for it to be corrected. This applies to actual information and not to any professional opinions we may have formed. We may ask you to provide documentation that our files are wrong. Where we agree that we made a mistake, we will make the correction and notify anyone to whom we sent this information. If we do not agree that we have made a mistake, we will still agree to include in our file a brief statement from you on the point and we will forward that statement to anyone else who received the earlier information.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION?

Our Information Officer, Carl McCaskell, can be reached at:

7-25 Redmond Drive
Hamilton, ON L8X 3K7
Phone: 905-318-0911
Fax: 905-318-7219

He will attempt to answer any questions or concerns you might have. If you wish to make a formal complaint about our privacy practices, you may make it in writing to our Information Officer. He will acknowledge receipt of your complaint.

This policy is made under the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act. That is a complex Act and provides some additional exceptions to the privacy principals that are too detailed to set out here. There some rare exceptions to the commitments set out above. A copy of the Act can be reviewed at www.privcom.gc.ca

For more general inquiries, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Canada oversees the administration of the privacy legislation in the private sector. The Commissioner of Canada oversees the administration of the privacy legislation in the private sector. The Commissioner also acts as a kind of ombudsman for privacy disputes. The Information and Privacy Commissioner can be reached at:

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