

Ruth Christiansen Counselling and Therapy

Client Consent and Privacy Policy

Provision of service

At your first appointment, Ruth Christiansen will undertake an assessment about whether she is a suitable clinician for your situation. At the end of this session, we will agree to an initial treatment plan or she will recommend an onward referral to a practitioner or service that is more suitable for your needs.

During assessment and treatment, Ruth Christiansen needs to collect information about you for the primary purpose of providing a quality service to you. In order to thoroughly assess, diagnose and provide therapy, we need to collect some personal information from you. If you do not provide this information; we may be unable to treat you.

Consent for treatment

Prior to your treatment, you will be asked to complete the online registration form via the secure Halaxy health program. On this form you are required to provide your consent for treatment and confirm that you have read and accept the terms outlined in this client consent and privacy policy.

Telehealth requirement to provide contact details and location

When working together by videoconference, clinicians need to be able to contact support people in your locality should any issues arise. You will be asked to provide the names and contact details of at least 1 person known to you before we commence the treatment. Because you may be in varied locations for each videoconference, clinicians will require you to provide your location at the commencement of each session.

Privacy in online communications

The privacy of any form of communication via the internet or a mobile device is potentially vulnerable and limited by the security of the technology. Zoom video conferencing will be employed. Zoom only transmits encrypted information, never has access to personal information and does not persistently store information that is transmitted. The limits of this can be read further at www.zoom.us

Billing and Medicare rebates

This practice uses Auto Payments through Halaxy Health Platform or eftpos for you to pay your appointment and cancellation fees. If you have a valid GP Mental Health Care Plan the rebate for your session is \$82.30 and this practice uses online Medicare rebates claiming for your convenience.

Cancellation Policy

You will receive a reminder sms 48 hours before your appointment time. If, for some reason, you need to cancel or postpone an appointment, Ruth Christiansen would appreciate it if you would make contact by sms, phone or email prior to the appointment and reschedule the appointment if required. This enables another client to book into the time slot. Please note: If less than 24hrs notice is given, the full session fee will be charged as a cancellation fee.

Crisis and emergency situations

Ruth Christiansen Therapy is not a crisis service. If you are in need of crisis support you are directed to contact your local area mental health crisis team at your closest hospital or call Lifeline on 13 11 14.

Privacy Policy

Ruth Christiansen ABN18659369255 is committed to complying with the [Privacy Act 1988](#), and the Australian Privacy Principles under that Act, and the privacy provisions of all applicable legislation.

This Privacy Policy covers all personal information we hold, that is information or opinion that identifies an individual. This includes information we have collected from people through our office, over the phone and over the internet, such as name, address, email address and phone numbers.

Collecting information - types of information we collect, how we collect it and the purposes for which we collect it

Types of personal information we collect

When we collect personal information from you, we will ensure that we do so fairly and explain to you why we are collecting the information and how we plan to use it. We will only collect information that is necessary for one or more of our functions or activities.

The type of personal information we collect about you depends on the circumstances in which the information is collected. Typically, the types of personal information we may collect can include (but is not limited to) your name, address, email address and phone numbers.

If you are a client, we may also collect details of your date of birth, billing and payment details, Medicare and insurer details, as well as health information about you so that we can perform our services. We may also receive health information about you from other health service providers, where you have consented to us collecting that from those third-party providers.

Health information is "sensitive information" - see below for further details.

Sensitive information

Sensitive information is a subset of personal information. If we collect sensitive information (as defined under the Privacy Act), we will treat it with the utmost security and confidentiality.

Sensitive information is defined in the Act to include information or opinion about such things as an individual's racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, membership of a political association, religious or philosophical beliefs, membership of a trade union or other professional body, criminal record or health information.

Sensitive information will be used by us only:

- for the primary purpose for which it was obtained
- for a secondary purpose that is directly related to the primary purpose
- with your consent or
- where required or authorised by law.

In addition to the types of personal information identified above, we may collect personal information as otherwise permitted or required by law. Where you choose not to provide requested information, we will advise you of what consequences this non-disclosure may have. For example, withholding certain information may limit our ability to provide relevant offers or services to you.

How we collect your personal information

Some of the common ways in which we may collect personal information include:

- if you are a client, during client on-boarding (i.e. via registration forms) and during treatment sessions
- when you make an enquiry or order in relation to products or services, including through our website
- from correspondence (whether in writing or electronically) or when you contact us via telephone, email, social media platforms or other means

Where it is reasonably practical to do so, we will collect your personal information directly from you. However, in certain cases, we may collect personal information from third parties, such as:

- from referrals or reports from other health professionals

Our purposes for handling your personal information

In general, we collect, use and disclose your personal information so that we can provide services to you and for purposes connected with our business operations.

Some of the specific purposes for which we collect, hold, use and disclose personal information are as follows:

- if you are a client/patient, to provide you with our services and products
- to comply with our legal and regulatory obligations
- to address any issues or complaints that we or you have regarding our relationship and
- to contact you regarding the above, including via SMS and email, by mail, by phone or in any other lawful manner.

We may also use or disclose your personal information for other purposes to which you have consented and as otherwise authorised, permitted or required by law.

Disclosing information

Your personal information may be disclosed to third parties in connection with the purposes for which we collected your personal information, as described above and in any privacy collection notices we provide to you.

This may include disclosing your personal information to the following types of third parties:

- our suppliers, contractors and organisations that provide us with technical and support services or who manage some of our business functions
- our related entities (who may use and disclose the information in the same manner we can)
- our professional supervisors and
- any third parties to whom you have directed or permitted us to disclose your personal information (e.g. to your treating doctor and other health professionals, to an insurer/compensation agency and/or your emergency contacts, if necessary).

We may also disclose your personal information in accordance with any consent you give or where disclosure is authorised, compelled or permitted by law.

Overseas transfers

In the ordinary course of our business, we do not generally disclose your personal information to overseas recipients.

Accessing and correcting your personal information

You may contact us (see "Contact details" section below) to request access to the personal information that we hold about you and/or to make corrections to that information, at any time. We will respond to all requests for access to or correction of personal information within a reasonable time.

On the rare occasions when we refuse access (which we will only do in accordance with applicable laws), we will provide you with a written notice stating our reasons for refusing access. We are not obliged to correct any of your personal information if we do not agree that it requires correction and may refuse to do so. If we refuse a correction request, we will provide you with a written notice stating our reasons for refusing.

We will not charge any fee for your access request but may charge an administrative fee for providing a copy of your personal information. To protect your personal information, we may require identification from you before releasing the requested information.

Storage and Security

We will hold personal information as either secure physical records, electronically on our computer systems, in cloud storage, and in some cases, on third-party servers.

Our goal is to protect the personal information collected by us. We take all reasonable steps to keep your personal information secure, safe and protected from misuse, interference, loss or unauthorised access.

When your personal information is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was obtained and is not required to be kept by law, we will take reasonable steps to destroy or permanently de-identify it. We may need to retain records containing personal information to comply with record-keeping obligations, and for other legitimate business purposes (such as quality assurance).

Data quality

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the data we collect, use or disclose is accurate, complete and up to date and has been obtained directly from you or other reputable sources. If you find that the

information we have is not up to date or is inaccurate, please advise us as soon as practicable so we can update our records and ensure we can continue to provide quality services to you.

Availability and review of Policy

We will make our Privacy Policy available upon request and will provide a link on our website. This Policy will be reviewed from time to time and any amendments will be incorporated into the updated version.

Complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this Privacy Policy or how we handle your personal information, including if you believe we have breached the Australian Privacy Principles, please contact us (see "Contact details" section below).

When contacting us please provide as much detail as possible in relation to your question, concern or complaint. We take all complaints seriously and will respond to your complaint in accordance with any applicable timeframes imposed by law and otherwise within a reasonable period. We request that you cooperate with us during this process and provide us with any relevant information that we may need.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your complaint, you may contact the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner:

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

GPO Box 5288, Sydney NSW 2001

Telephone: 1300 363 992

Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au

<https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-complaints/lodge-a-privacy-complaint-with-us>

Contact details

Our contact details are as follows:

Ruth Christiansen

ruthchristiansentherapy@gmail.com

0448 567 211

Date of Privacy Policy: 11th April 2024

Acknowledgements

This Privacy Policy was created using a template provided by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), which includes content from these resources:

- *Template Privacy Policy for Private Practitioners*, Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA)
- *Privacy Policy Template*, Business Victoria