



## Digital Communications Policy

Version 1.3. Last updated September 19, 2022.

### Introduction

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This document describes how we at Lighthouse Child and Adolescent Psychology ("Lighthouse Psychology") communicate online with clients. Many clients appreciate the ease and convenience of online services ranging from banking to booking vacations. We aim to offer the same level of convenience our clients already enjoy in these other sectors, in full compliance with Ontario's privacy laws.

For more information on related topics like what information we collect, how we store information, and your data and privacy rights, please consult our Privacy Policy.

This policy is written to support all applicable legislation, regulation, and professional standards, including the *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004* (PHIPA), the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA), and the *Privacy Act*. In case of any conflict, the law, regulation, or standard applies.

### Our approach to digital communications

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Our approach to digital communications is guided by our professional ethical obligations and based on two principles:

**First, our primary concern is protecting your privacy.** That's why we won't send sensitive information like reports or diagnoses over email, and it's why we are not able to accept online reviews or testimonials.

**Second, we set limits to protect the *therapeutic alliance*, which is the special relationship between mental-health professionals and their clients.** Studies have shown that clients achieve better outcomes when clients and providers have a trusting and professional relationship with clear boundaries.<sup>1</sup> That's why Lighthouse Psychology has no social media presence, and why we are not able to accept personal testimonials.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g.: Lambert, M. J., & Barley, D. E. (2001). Research summary on the therapeutic relationship and psychotherapy outcome. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 38(4), 357-361. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0033-3204.38.4.357>.

## Email

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**We use email for administrative matters only and cannot send sensitive personal information through email,** because email is not a secure way to communicate. With your consent, for example, we will use email to send you appointment reminders or updates about new services. However, we cannot answer clinical questions or send sensitive documents like psychological reports through email. Note that emails are considered part of the client file and can therefore be subpoenaed by the courts.

## Secure portal and online booking

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We are pleased to offer clients a secure online portal to book appointments and view reports and clinical documents as soon as they are available. This is the only way we can transmit sensitive clinical information online. All portal data is stored in Canada and encrypted in the same way as your online banking information would be. Please treat your portal username and password as carefully as you would your banking information.

## Telehealth online appointments

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As of April 2020, we are excited to offer clients the option to participate in telehealth online appointments. Telehealth appointments are provided through our practice management software (<https://jane.app/>) and follow all of the same security guidelines as the secure portal described above. As with any electronic transmission of information, there is always the possibility of third-party interception. However, the telehealth platform was developed in Canada to meet Canadian privacy standards (all data is encrypted, and nothing is recorded or stored), making it comparable to other encrypted platforms, and providing our clients the confidence to embrace this modality.

All clients participating in telehealth appointments are required to:

- Provide contact information for an emergency contact who can be reached during the scheduled session times. At each appointment this information will be confirmed.
- Provide a phone number (cellular or landline) where they can be reached during the appointment, in the event that video communication fails.
- Provide credit card information that will be stored securely (<https://www.helcim.com/ca/>). Credit cards will be charged at the end of each session and for every missed appointment or appointments cancelled with less than 24 hours notice.
- All children and adolescents are required to have an adult on-site (e.g., in the home) during telehealth appointments, to assist in the case of an emergency.

For your own safety and security during online appointments, the following guidelines are recommended:

- Make sure you have a private space in which to participate in online sessions. Choose a location where the conversation will not be overheard (private room, stationary vehicle). Earphones can enhance privacy.
- If using Wi-Fi, ensure that the connection is secure (i.e., do not use a public network at a hotel, coffee shop, etc.), make sure the router is secure and password protected.
- Clients are required to make best efforts to ensure sufficient Internet bandwidth to support video calls. For instance, if the connection is weak, moving closer to the router or plugging the computer directly into an ethernet connection are suggested. Limiting the number of people in the home who are using bandwidth-intensive applications during telehealth sessions (e.g., streaming video, online gaming, video conference calls) is also recommended.

## Social media

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To ensure client confidentiality, Lighthouse Psychology has no official presence on any social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter. For the same reason, Lighthouse Psychology staff are not able to accept connection requests from clients or their families, and will not look up any clients or their families on any social media sites.

We provide original articles and information on our website that we hope families will find helpful, but have intentionally disabled commenting and sharing on social media.

## Online reviews and testimonials

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The law in Ontario strictly prohibits psychologists from using testimonials from clients or their families in advertising.<sup>2</sup> To protect client confidentiality and to respect our legal obligations, we ask our clients please not to provide online reviews and testimonials for Lighthouse Psychology.

## How to contact us with questions

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Our Information Officer is Dr. Anne Ritzema, who can be reached for privacy-related questions at (613) 909-7448 or [anne.ritzema@lighthousepsychology.ca](mailto:anne.ritzema@lighthousepsychology.ca).

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<sup>2</sup> See s. 18(1)a of O. Reg. 209/94 under the *Psychology Act, 1991*. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/940209>.