

Bluff Road Psychology takes its obligations under the Victorian Health Records Act 2001 and the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 seriously and takes all reasonable steps in order to comply and protect the privacy of personal information.

Collection of Information

Bluff Road Psychology collects and holds personal health information about you.

This information enables us to properly assess, diagnose, treat your illnesses and be proactive in your health care needs. The information we may ask you may be very personal but not having this information may restrict our capacity to provide you with the standard of psychological care that you expect.

All members of Bluff Road Psychology involved in your care will have access to your personal information.

This means we may use and disclose the information you provide in the following ways:

- Disclosure to others involved in your health care, including Health Practitioners, specialists outside, and third parties, and in emergency situations. This may occur through referral handover to other third parties.
- Administrative purposes in running our practice, including our insurer or indemnity provider, and quality assurance and accreditation bodies.
- Billing purposes, including providing information to your health insurance fund, Medicare and other organisations responsible for the financial aspects of your care.
- Conducting psychological research. You will be informed when such activities are being conducted and your involvement will only take place if you provide express signed consent for each program.
- Assisting with training and education of other psychologists. You will be informed when such activities are being conducted and your involvement will only take place if you provide express consent to your psychologist for each program.

Information Quality

Our goal is to ensure that your information is accurate, complete and up-to-date. To assist us with this, please contact us if any of the details you have provided change. Further, if you believe that the information we have about you is not accurate, complete or up-to-date, contact us and we will use all reasonable efforts to correct the information.

Information Security

The storage, use and, where necessary, the transfer of personal health information will be undertaken in a secure manner that protects patient privacy. We will take all reasonable steps to protect the security of the personal information that we hold. This includes appropriate measures to protect electronic materials stored and those generated in hard copy. Even if you leave the practice we are still required to keep patient information for as long as required by law i.e 7 years or more after your last appointment depending on your age.

What happens if you choose not to provide the information?

You are not obliged to provide us your personal information. However, if you choose not to provide Bluff Road Psychology with your personal details such as name, address, date of birth etc we may not be able to provide you with the full range of our services.

Treatment of Children

The rights of children to the privacy of their health information, based on the professional judgment of the psychologist and consistent with law, might restrict access to an older child's information by parents or guardians. Generally, we prefer to seek the consent of both parents where appropriate to treat minors.

Access

Clients have a general right of access to all health information held about them. We and our psychologists comply with the Health Privacy Principles and the Ethical Guidelines of the Australian Psychological Society <http://www.psychology.org.au/about/ethics> in the collection, use and disclosure of all Health Information and to ensure that all Health Information is kept strictly confidential.

The following is a list of the health information to which individuals have a right to access:

- The history of their record
- Any results or plans of assessment.

Bluff Road Psychology is required to provide the individual with access in the format requested by the individual

Bluff Road Psychology could refuse access if:

- It would pose a serious threat to anyone's life or health;
- It would have an unreasonable impact on someone else's privacy;
- It might prejudice an investigation of possible unlawful activity;
- Denying access is required and authorized by or under law.

If access is refused on the grounds of serious threat to the clients' life or health, the client can ask for a second opinion – this process is described in the Complaint Handling Process section.

Discretionary refusal of access:

The psychologist may choose not to provide access where:

- It would have an unreasonable impact on the privacy of other people;
- The request is frivolous or vexatious;
- The information relates to existing or anticipated legal proceedings between the practice or psychologist and the information would not ordinarily be obtainable by the process of discovery in those proceedings;
- It would reveal the practice's intentions in relation to negotiations with the individual (other than re the provision of a psychology service), in such a way as to expose us unreasonably to disadvantage;
- It would be likely to prejudice a law enforcement function by or on behalf of a law enforcement agency;
- The individual has already unsuccessfully made a request for the information, and there are no reasonable grounds for making the request again.

Where there are direct inconsistencies between the Victorian Health Records Act and the Commonwealth Privacy Act, the Commonwealth law will prevail.

Request for Access

Clients do not have to give reasons for requesting access.

The privacy legislation does not require immediate handing over of a record or a test result. Access should however be provided within a reasonable time (no longer than 45 days).

If a client requests access to an assessment result (whether before the psychologist has had the opportunity of consulting with the patient, or after) the psychologist should handle this situation in accordance with usual clinical practice. A hard copy of assessment results may be given to the patient after consultation with their psychologist.

Where a client requests access to an assessment report from 12 months (or more) ago, after appropriate clinical investigations had occurred, the request should still be referred to the psychologist to handle in accordance with usual clinical practice.

Where a client requests more detailed access, for example a copy of the entire file or a chance to view a large portion of the file, this would normally require written application for access as described below.

If the client requests a copy of the file, then Bluff Road Psychology must comply – an accurate summary can only be supplied.

The original records are the property of Bluff Road Psychology.

There are some circumstances in which access is restricted, and in these cases reasons for denying access will be explained. Clients can only be given access to their record while their psychologist is present to explain and discuss the record. No client will be allowed unsupervised access to their record.

The access process:

The request should initially be referred to the client's regular psychologist, who will determine whether the information can be provided 'simply, freely and easily', or whether to ask the client to complete a written request for access to their psychology records.

Where the psychologist decides that a more formal level of access is required, the psychologist health practitioner shall ask the client to write to the Bluff Road Psychology specifically requesting what they require.

Examples of information that could be provided 'simply, freely and easily' might be a copy of assessment, progress or discharge psychological reports.

If the client needed to see the psychologist for other reasons this could perhaps be dealt with during a standard consultation, in which case no additional charge would apply. If the client did not need to see the psychologist a standard fee (described below) would apply.

Types of Access and Costs:

The types of access available, and relevant costs, are outlined below.

A range of fees (as set by the Health Records Act) are payable to cover Bluff Road Psychology's costs in providing access.

Accurate Summary

- The usual fee for a consult of comparable duration, or \$60 per 15 minutes or part thereof + GST. There is no Medicare rebate available for this fee and this should be noted on the private account.

Copy

- 20 cents per A4 black & white page (photocopied or printed from computer), plus
- Reasonable costs if not A4, or if in color, plus
- Reasonable costs incurred in assessing and collating the information (ie. time spent by psychologist and or staff).

There is no Medicare rebate available for this fee and this should be noted on the private account.

Viewing file with explanation by the psychologist

- The usual fee for a consult of comparable duration.

Changes to the psychology record:

If a client finds that the information held on them is not accurate or complete, the client may have that information amended accordingly by their psychologist.

Disclosure of Health Information to Defence Organizations and Lawyers

Psychologists may be obliged to disclose patient information relating to adverse outcomes to their Medical Defence Organization, insurer, medical experts or lawyers, without obtaining patient consent, so long as the disclosure is within the reasonable expectations of the patient.

Complaint Handling Process

The client's psychologist would usually be the first appropriate person to discuss any complaints. Most issues can be resolved simply through discussion with the client.

If you do not feel comfortable raising the issue with your psychologist, are not satisfied with the response, or are wanting to make a complaint about our administration services, you can lodge a complaint with us.

Complaints can be made over the phone or via email. We encourage complaints, where possible, to be submitted in writing via email to the clinical manager Dr Aneta Kotevski via our main administration:

Email: admin@bluffroadpsychology.com.au

Telephone: (03) 9599 8290.

Our Privacy Policy is available on our website

If you are not satisfied with our handling of your complaint internally, or our internal process presents a conflict of interest, you are entitled to pursue an external method of review.

National Health Practitioner Ombudsman and Privacy Commissioner

The Ombudsman deals with complaints about the bodies responsible for implementing Australia's national health practitioner regulation scheme. They ask that you first raise your concerns with the body that is the subject of your complaint in order to provide them with an opportunity to resolve your concerns.

Telephone: 1300 795 265

Email: complaints@nhpopc.gov.au

Mailing Address:

National Health Practitioner Ombudsman and Privacy Commissioner
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne, Victoria, 3000

Second opinion of refusal of access

When advised that access has been refused on the grounds of serious threat to the individual's life or health, the individual can ask for a 'second opinion'. The individual may nominate any health service provider who has consented to being nominated.

Bluff Road Psychology must accept this nomination if they provide the same kind of service as a psychologist and have the ability to interpret and understand the health information. The clinic must give a copy of the file to the nominated health service provider within 14 days. That person then looks at the file, discusses it with the usual psychologist at Bluff Road Psychology, and makes a decision as to whether it poses a threat to the individual's life or health. If the second opinion is that there is no threat, access must be provided in the form of inspection, but a copy does not have to be provided.