



## Child Psychotherapy & Forensic Matters/Dual Relationship Clarification

Communications between the child and the therapist are confidential, subject to the limitations specified below.

Certain limitations to confidentiality apply according to North Carolina State Law in which the therapist has the duty to report information concerning suspected child abuse, which includes sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect. Once such allegations are reported, the therapy can still continue if all parties agree. Dr. Heiko may non-consensually breach the child's/teen's confidentiality and inform parents and other appropriate parties of any serious harm or dangerous behaviors on the part of the child/teen which may come up during a session (e.g., such as suicidal ideation, intent to harm anyone, or cutting, for instance).

Dr. Heiko provides client forms through the website under "Client Forms" and parents email/send them in before scheduling a meeting with Dr. Heiko, so that parents are clear about client confidentiality and guidelines.

Separation or divorce are hard on everyone, especially the children. When the parent relationship is in turmoil, it is even more important for the psychotherapy to take place in a safe, sheltered and therapeutic environment. This environment is undermined when children worry that what they say in therapy will be revealed in court, and possibly used against a parent in an adversarial way.

To protect that environment, Dr. Heiko wants parents to understand that she is unwilling and ethically unable to engage in a dual relationship as a witness in any legal custody or visitation action in court regarding the child/teen client. Her role is solely as an individual therapist for the child. She will not undertake any "reunification" therapy or other professional family therapy role as a result. She will not make custody or visitation recommendations or arrangements. Dr. Heiko, through the psychologist's ethical code (American Psychological Association) and her malpractice liability attorneys' advice, is prohibited from engaging

in a dual relationship as a witness in any legal custody or visitation action in court regarding the child/teen. Her role is solely as an individual therapist for the child. She may be willing to discuss the therapy with a court ordered Special Master, Parent Coordinator or Custody Evaluator representing the legal interests of the child to provide information that might be helpful to such a professional in determining the best interests of the child.

Dr. Heiko will inform parents of the general goals and progress of treatment through joint attendance at a parent-therapist session to be scheduled with both parents together if they are named as custodial parents. Parents will be provided with a general understanding of the main content issues of the therapy. However, the child or teen is given the right to confidentiality. This means that specific issues discussed may not be communicated to the parents if it is deemed best to maintain the child's privacy or if the therapist is requested by the child to do so (that remains under Dr. Heiko's discretion). Dr. Heiko will make every effort to encourage and assist the child/teen to share concerns or information directly with the parent or parents where appropriate.

Communication about therapy other than scheduling can only take place in Dr. Heiko's office, not through phone calls, texts or emails. Therapy is on a fee for service basis, and the fee schedule is posted on the website [www.drheiko.com](http://www.drheiko.com). Payment must be brought to each session. Debit or credit cards may be used at the time of the appointment; but office policy prohibits using credit or debit card numbers over the phone for safety reasons. Dr. Heiko can, of course, accept check payments sent in advance of the scheduled sessions. If one parent is the noncustodial parent, that parent will respect the therapeutic relationship between the child and Dr. Heiko, and will wait for the child's readiness to engage in therapeutic conversation in a family consultation meeting, as directed by Dr. Heiko.

Although any previously completed evaluations, psychological summaries or reports may have been the subject of testimony or court proceedings, the psychotherapy sessions undertaken with Dr. Heiko shall be confidential and not made the subject of testimony or of a subpoena for court purposes to produce any written documents which may be prepared during the course of psychotherapy. This is done to protect and respect the confidential nature of the child's therapy sessions and help the child progress and resolve conflicts.