Reporting on Music Therapy Clients on the Internet and Privacy Issues

Respect for Persons should be maintained in music therapy practice at all times. This promotes the client’s rights to autonomy, confidentiality, and voluntarism. Increasingly, client information is being used for educational purposes in universities and public presentations, including conferences and the media. This may involve the Internet. Following are WFMT’s recommended Principles for Practice to promote client privacy and confidentiality.

Do
In multidisciplinary settings only share client information, which can be used to advance therapeutic outcomes.

Clients and/or their guardians must provide consent for any public presentation of therapeutic material, including the use of audiovisual recordings of sessions or session products (for example, song recordings). Such consent should be in writing (i.e., a signed release form) and must involve the client and/or guardian understanding the extent of public usage of the material, e.g., whether the material is to be used for education through the Internet. If a music therapy group is depicted, all clients in the groups must give consent for the depiction, even if they are not being used in the illustration of the therapeutic practice.

Music therapists need to comply with their organization’s rules about publicly presenting client material. This may include a consent form with the organization’s letterhead.

A WFMT Model Multimedia Release Form is online but may need adaptation in accordance with national guidelines and legal authorities in each country.

When music therapists present client material in public, therapists should declare that informed consent has been received for the presentation.

Pseudonyms should be used instead of the clients’ real names. Music therapists may only use clients’ names in public presentations when the clients (and/or guardian) have given informed consent and therapists have requested that they consider the long-term implications of this decision. It is recommended that clients give informed consent for multimedia releases if the real name appears.

In some countries it is permissible to present de-identified material for educational purposes. If the material is only identifiable to the client, the client may consent to its usage. This may be verbal consent. However, music therapists should check local guidance.
Music therapists may slightly alter case material for educational purposes to maintain client anonymity (e.g., demographic information) but only when the alteration does not change the authenticity of the depicted therapeutic relationship process.

When requesting permission for publicly displaying client material, music therapists design the materials to the best of their abilities such that the visual and auditory materials will not adversely affect the client’s future care.

Only in rare circumstances client confidentiality should be breached. For example, in some countries it is mandatory to report alleged sex offenses against children uncovered in therapeutic and educational contexts.

**Do Not**
Music therapists must not record or photograph music therapists’ and other professionals’ presentations of clinical material, unless the presenter states that the clients and/or the guardians have consented to the recording and/or redistribution of their clinical material.