

# Alliance Counseling & Coaching, LLC

## Social Media and Communications Policy

You are encouraged to read this document and ask any questions you may have. Social media is rapidly evolving, we will update this policy as needed. This document describes Alliance Counseling & Coaching, LLC practice policies regarding social media and related technologies.

**Friending (and similar):** Alliance Counseling & Coaching, LLC requires that therapists follow the Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association (2014) and Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (2017). These Codes consider “virtual relationships” to be equivalent to face-to-face relationships and the Code(s) generally discourage multiple relationships with clients. Further, the Code states that Counselors are prohibited from engaging in personal virtual relationships with individuals with whom they have a current counseling relationship (e.g., through social and other media). (Section A.5.e, ACA Code of Ethics, 2014). Therefore, Alliance Counseling and Coaching practice policy is to not “knowingly” accept a friend request (or similar virtual relationship that uses another term) on any social networking platform from current clients or in any case in which are believed to blur counselor-client relationship and that relationship could be adversely affected. This policy includes (but not limited to) the following social networking platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Linked-In, Group Me.

Note that Alliance Counseling & Coaching, LLC maintains a professional presence for practice purposes on Facebook. This presence exists solely to provide information to the public pertaining to our practice and related topics. It also assists in directing interested individuals to the official practice website for our practice.

**Instant Messaging (IM):** It is our practice policy to not knowingly communicate with clients via instant messaging, “chatting”, or similar technologies. This includes, for example, instant messaging through Facebook and other social networking sites.

**Email:** It is our practice policy that each individual therapist decides if they will engage in accepting emails from the clients they see. The office does not encourage ongoing emails as a form of communication. While encryption of email is required by HIPAA the 2013 HHS Omnibus rule states: “If the individuals are notified of the risk and still prefer unencrypted email, the individual has the right to receive protected health inform in that way, and covered entities are not responsible for unauthorized access of protected health information while in transmission to individual based on the individual’s request. Further, covered entities are not responsible for safeguarding information once delivered to the individual. (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2013)

**Texting:** It is our practice policy that each individual therapist can decide if they would like to use texting as a form of communication for appointment reminders or rescheduling options. Texting is prohibited for client related treatment information and is not privacy protected. A phone call to the office or to your therapist, if the therapist has decided to give out their direct office number, is the preferred way of getting into contact with your therapist and/or for scheduling purposes.

**Phone Calls:** You may call the main office number listed on the website or the number listed on your therapist's business card for matters that can be handled in a brief amount of time (e.g., to let me know that you are running late to a session); or to reschedule appointments. Also, be aware that your therapist may not be available at the time you call. Therapist's voicemails are confidential but please remember that therapists do not necessarily check voicemail frequently during the day. As always, **do not call the main office number or your therapist direct phone number for emergency situations. All emergencies should be handled by calling 911 and/or going to your nearest emergency room.**

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Client or (personal representative's) signature

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Date