Advertisement Guidelines: Degree vs. Licensure

When clinicians obtain a doctoral degree they earn the right to be referred to as Doctor. However, when advertising a clinical practice the license under which services are provided must be clearly identified to avoid any confusion regarding scope of practice. A client may interpret "Doctor" to mean physician or psychologist.

For example, if a provider has a PhD in psychology but is practicing under a master's level license (LCSW, MFT, LPC), the provider's advertisement must include both the degree and license. Voice mails and client forms must also inform the client regarding the practice license.

Not Acceptable Advertising	Acceptable Advertising
Voice Mail: "You have reached the office of Dr. Ann Smith"	Voice Mail: "You have reached the office of Dr. Ann Smith, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist" or "You have reached the office of Dr. Ann Smith, Licensed Psychologist"
Ann Smith PhD Licensed Therapist	Ann Smith PhD Licensed MFT – License #29660

Treating Couples Under Insurance Benefits

While couples therapy is a covered benefit as a treatment strategy, ***all insurance benefits are administered under a single individual***. As a result, ***providers must designate the "identified patient"*** and complete all charting and billing as it pertains to this individual.

- The treatment plan must address the diagnosis and symptoms of the identified patient and not the couple as a unit.
- Progress notes must indicate the identified patient's response to treatment.
- Claims for couples' therapy (90847) can only be submitted under the identified patient's record. Providers cannot submit two separate claims for a single couple session.
- If the partner of the identified patient needs to be seen individually, a completely separate authorization, chart, and claim is required.
- Individual sessions for the partner cannot be documented in the identified patient's chart and cannot be billed under the identified patient's authorization.

Not Acceptable Documentation	Acceptable Documentation
John and Helen seen together. Helen reported increased depression due to ongoing arguments with John over finances. John quiet and withdrawn. Practiced assertive communication skills.	Patient and spouse seen together. Patient quiet and withdrawn in response to increased arguments in home over finances. Practiced assertive communication skills to engage patient.

Confidentiality concerns are created whenever medical records include clinical information for both partners in a single chart. If the couple ends their relationship and one partner later requests the medical records, the chart can not be released without both partner's signatures. To release records without both partners' signatures is a breach of confidentiality for the non-requesting partner.

The recommendation is that providers create a separate informed consent form for couples' treatment, which clearly describes the manner in which documentation is kept and the requirements to release documentation. Both partners should sign this consent form.