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## **PSYCHOTHERAPIST-PATIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT**

Welcome to my practice. This document (the Agreement) contains important information about my professional services and business policies. It also contains summary information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), a new federal law that provides new privacy protections and new patient rights with regard to the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) used for the purpose of treatment, payment, and health care operations. HIPAA requires that I provide you with a Notice of Privacy Practices (the Notice) for use and disclosure of PHI for treatment, payment and health care operations. The Notice, which is attached to this Agreement, explains HIPAA and its application to your personal health information in greater detail. The law requires that I obtain your signature acknowledging that I have provided you with this information at the end of this session. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you read them carefully before our next session. We can discuss any questions you have about the procedures at that time. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. You may revoke this Agreement in writing at any time. That revocation will be binding on me unless I have taken action in reliance on it; if there are obligations imposed on me by your health insurer in order to process or substantiate claims made under your policy; or if you have not satisfied any financial obligations you have incurred.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient, and the particular problems you are experiencing. There are many different methods I may use to deal with the problems that

you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have many benefits. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

## **MEETINGS**

I normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 2 to 4 sessions. During this time, we can both decide if I am the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If psychotherapy is begun, I will usually schedule one 45-minute session (one appointment hour of 45 minutes duration) per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent. If we schedule a weekly appointment hour, you are responsible for the session on a weekly basis.

## **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

My hourly fee is \$275 for individual therapy sessions and \$350 for couples/family therapy sessions. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for all of my professional time, including preparation and transportation costs, even if I am called to testify by another party.

Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge \$275.00 per hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding.

### **CONTACTING ME**

Due to my work schedule, I am often not immediately available by telephone. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by a private voice mail that I monitor frequently. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform me of some times when you will be available. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

In emergencies, you can first try to reach me at my office number. However, if you are unable to reach me immediately, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. Please be sure to leave me a message about the emergency.

### **E-MAIL POLICY**

I prefer to use e-mail only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not e-mail me content related to your therapy sessions, as e-mail is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with me by e-mail, be aware that all e-mails are retained in the logs of your and my Internet service providers. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of the Internet service provider. You should also know that any e-mail I receive from you and any responses that I send you will be kept in your treatment record.

### **LIMITS ON CONFIDENTIALITY**

The law protects the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist. In most situations, I can only release information about your treatment to others if you sign a written Authorization form that meets certain legal requirements imposed by HIPAA. There are other situations that require only that you provide written, advance consent. Your signature on this Agreement provides consent for those activities, as follows:

- I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other health and mental health professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my patient. The other professionals are also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I feel that it is important to our work together. I will note all consultations in your Clinical Record (which is called "PHI" in my Notice of Psychologist's Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information).
- Disclosures required by health insurers or to collect overdue fees are discussed elsewhere in this Agreement.
- If a patient threatens to harm himself/herself, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her, or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

There are some situations where I am permitted or required to disclose information without either your consent or Authorization:

- If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning the professional services that I provided you, such information is protected by the psychologist-patient privilege law. I cannot provide any information without your written authorization, or a court order. If you are involved in or contemplating litigation, you should consult with your attorney to determine whether a court would be likely to order me to disclose information.
- If a government agency is requesting the information for health oversight activities, I may be required to provide it for them.
- If a patient files a complaint or lawsuit against me, I may disclose relevant information regarding that patient in order to defend myself.
- If I am providing treatment for conditions directly related to worker's compensation claim, I may have to submit such records, upon appropriate request,

to Chairman of the Worker's Compensation Board on such forms and at such times as the chairman may require.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take actions, which I believe are necessary to attempt to protect others from harm, and I may have to reveal some information about a patient's treatment. These situations are unusual in my practice.

§ If I receive information in my professional capacity from a child or the parents or guardian or other custodian of a child that that gives me reasonable cause to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, the law requires that I report this to the appropriate governmental agency, usually the statewide central register of child abuse and maltreatment, or the local child protective services office. Once such a report is filed, I may be required to provide additional information.

§ If a patient communicates an immediate threat of serious physical harm to an identifiable victim, I may be required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient.

If such a situation arises, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action and I will limit my disclosure to what is necessary.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have now or in the future. The laws governing confidentiality can be quite complex, and I am not an attorney. In situations where specific advice is required, formal legal advice may be needed.

## **PROFESSIONAL RECORDS**

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep Protected Health Information about you in your Clinical Record. Except in unusual circumstances that involve danger to yourself and/or others or where information has been supplied to me confidentially by others, you may examine and/or receive a copy of your Clinical Record, if you request it in writing. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, I recommend that you initially review

them in my presence, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional so you can discuss the contents. In most circumstances, I am allowed to charge a copying fee of 50 cents per page (and for certain other expenses). If I refuse your request for access to your records, you have a right to review, which I will discuss with you upon request.

## **PATIENT RIGHTS**

HIPAA provides you with several new or expanded rights with regard to your Clinical Records and disclosures of protected health information. These rights include requesting that I amend your record; requesting restrictions on what information from your Clinical Records is disclosed to others; requesting an accounting of most disclosures of protected health information that you have neither consented to nor authorized; determining the location to which protected information disclosures are sent; having any complaints you make about my policies and procedures recorded in your records; and the right to a paper copy of this Agreement, the attached Notice form, and my privacy policies and procedures. I am happy to discuss any of these rights with you.

## **MINORS & PARENTS**

Patients under 18 years of age who are not emancipated and their parents should be aware that the law may allow parents to examine their child's treatment records. Even where parental consent is given, children over age 12 may have the right to control access to their treatment records. While privacy in psychotherapy is very important, particularly with teenagers, parental involvement is also essential to successful treatment, particularly with younger children. For children age 12 and over, I request an agreement between my patient and his/her parents allowing me to share general information about the progress of the child's treatment and his/her attendance at scheduled sessions. Any other communication will require the child's verbal authorization, unless I feel that the child is in danger or is a danger to someone else, in which case, I will notify the parents of my concern. Before giving parents any information, I will discuss the matter with the child, if possible, and do my best to handle any objections he/she may have.

## **BILLING AND PAYMENTS**

I bill for services at the end of every month, and you are expected to pay for services within a week of receiving a statement. Payment schedules for other professional services

will be agreed upon when they are requested.

If your balance exceeds \$1500.00 at any time, sessions may be suspended until the account is current. If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, I have the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court, which will require me to disclose otherwise confidential information. If I am planning to hire a collection agency, I will inform you two weeks prior to doing so to provide you the opportunity to pay me the amount owed without having to involve a collection agency. In most collection situations, the only information I release regarding a patient's treatment is his/her name, address, the nature of services provided, and the amount due. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim.

### **INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT**

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. I will fill out forms and provide you with whatever assistance I can in helping you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; however, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of my fees. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers.

You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services. If you have questions about the coverage, call your plan administrator. Of course, I will provide you with whatever information I can based on my experience and will be happy to help you in understanding the information you receive from your insurance company. If it is necessary to clear confusion, I will be willing to call the company on your behalf.

You should also be aware that your contract with your health insurance company requires that I provide it with information relevant to the services that I provide to you. I am required to provide a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes I am required to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of your entire Clinical Record. In such situations, I will make every effort to release only the minimum

information about you that is necessary for the purpose requested. This information will become part of the insurance company files and will probably be stored in a computer. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, I have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. In some cases, they may share the information with a national medical information databank. I will provide you with a copy of any report I submit, if you request it. By signing this Agreement, you agree that I can provide requested information to your carrier.

Once we have all of the information about your insurance coverage, we will discuss what we can expect to accomplish with the benefits that are available and what will happen if they run out before you feel ready to end your sessions. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself to avoid the problems described above.

**YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ THE INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY ITS TERMS DURING OUR PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP.**

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Signature of Patient or Patient's Personal Representative, if applicable

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Name of Patient or Patient's Personal Representative, if applicable

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Description of Authority of Patient's Personal Representative, if applicable

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Date

Revised 04/19