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## **OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT**

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Psychotherapy and counseling are not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the therapist and client, and the particular problems you hope to address. There are many different methods I may use to deal with those problems. 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. Because 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 benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But, there are no guarantees as to 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 about whether you feel comfortable working with me. At the end of the evaluation, I will notify you if I believe that I am not the right therapist for you and, if so, I will give you referrals to other practitioners whom I believe are better suited to help you.

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 1 to 3 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 we agree to begin psychotherapy, I will usually schedule one 50 to 55-minute session per week, at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent. Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24-

hour advance notice of cancellation [unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control].

### **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

My hourly fee is \$120.00. If we meet more than the usual time, I will charge accordingly. In addition to weekly appointments, I charge this same hourly rate for other professional services you may need, though I will prorate the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other professional services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other service you may request of me. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for any professional time I spend on your legal matter, even if the request comes from another party. [I charge \$120 per hour for professional services I am asked or required to perform in relation to your legal matter. I also charge a copying fee of \$.12 per page for records requests.]

### **BILLING AND PAYMENTS**

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage that you have confirmed coverage for my services. If coverage is verified, you may then pay your deductible and/or copay at the end of each session and I will file for payment with your insurance company. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when such services are requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan.

### **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 necessary, I am willing to call the insurance company on your behalf to obtain clarification.

Due to the rising costs of health care, insurance benefits have increasingly become more complex. It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how much mental health coverage is available. "Managed Health Care" plans often require authorization before they provide reimbursement for

mental health services. These plans are often limited to short-term treatment approaches designed to work out specific problems that interfere with a person's usual level of functioning. It may be necessary to seek approval for more therapy after a certain number of sessions. Though a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, some patients feel that they need more services after insurance benefits end. [Some managed-care plans will not allow me to provide services to you once your benefits end. If this is the case, I will try to assist you in finding another provider who will help you continue your psychotherapy.]

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require that I provide them with your clinical diagnosis. Sometimes I have to provide additional clinical information, such as treatment plans, progress notes or summaries, or copies of the entire record (in rare cases). This information will become part of the insurance company files. 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 records I submit, if you request it. ***You understand that, by using your insurance, you authorize me to release such information to your insurance company. I will try to keep that information limited to the minimum necessary.***

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 our sessions. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself to avoid the problems described above unless prohibited by the insurance contract.

## **CONTACTING ME**

I am often not immediately available by telephone. I probably will not answer the phone when I am with a patient. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by a voicemail 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 when you leave your voicemail message. If you are unable to reach me and are having an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

I do not use any form of social media in my professional practice. Phone, text, and, email communications are available. However, in order for us to communicate by text and email, you are required to read and sign the consent form for these types of communications which I will provide to you. Your consent will be saved in your medical record. At any time, you can opt-out of these communications. You simply have to type STOP on text or email and you will be opted out of that form of communication and it will be recorded in your file. I will not initiate contact by text or email without your consent.

**CONFIDENTIALITY [for adult clients]**

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist is protected by law, and I can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. But there are a few exceptions.

In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent me from providing any information about your treatment. In some legal proceedings, a judge may order my testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it, and I must comply with that court order.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if I have to reveal some information about a patient's treatment. For example, if I believe that a child [elderly person or disabled person] is being abused or has been abused, I must [may be required to] make a report to the appropriate state agency.

If I believe that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am [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 the 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. If a similar situation occurs in the course of our work together, I will attempt to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my patient. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. Ordinarily, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I believe that it is important to our work together.

Although this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality is intended to inform you about potential issues that could arise, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have at our next meeting. I will be happy to discuss these issues with you and provide clarification when possible. However, if you need specific clarification or advice, I am unable to provide, formal legal advice may be needed, as the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex and I am not an attorney.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

CLIENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

CLIENT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

PROVIDER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PROVIDER SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_