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PHONE (513) 651-5605

## **OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT**

*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 is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient, and the particular problems you bring forward. There are many different methods I may use to deal with the problems that you wish to address. Psychotherapy is not like a visit to a medical doctor. 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 to 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 benefits for people. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees about 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. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. 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 will usually schedule one 50-minute session per week. Appointments reserve a specific time for one patient. If you feel it necessary to cancel a scheduled appointment, please call at least 24 hours in advance. Otherwise you will be charged for the full fee for the missed session. You will also be charged if you do not cancel and do not show for a scheduled visit. Such charges may be waived if we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control. If possible, I will try to reschedule the appointment. Remember, no shows and late cancellations are not insurance reimbursable. You must therefore pay the entire charge of the visit, not just the co-pay.

### **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

My hourly fee is \$120. In addition to weekly appointments, I charge this amount for other services you may need, including report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 15 minutes, attendance at meetings you have authorized with other professionals, preparation of records or treatment summaries, or other services you may request.

## **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 which requires another arrangement. All co-pays are due at the time of your visit. The contract for reimbursement is between you and your insurance carrier. You remain responsible for payment of your bill in full to this office if for any reason your insurance company fails to reimburse. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a payment installment plan. 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.

## **INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT**

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, as stated above, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment. 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 understand information from your insurance company. If it is necessary to clear confusion, I will be willing to call the company on your behalf.

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 such as HMOs and PPOs 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. While much can be accomplished in short-term therapy, some patients feel they need more services after insurance benefits end.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize me to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes I have to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of the entire record (in rare cases). 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. At your request, I will provide you with a copy of any report I submit.

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.

## **CONTACTING ME**

I am often not immediately available by telephone. While I am usually in my office between 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM, I probably will not answer the phone when I am with a patient. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by an answering machine 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. In emergencies, you can call my

emergency number, (513) 618-7428, and the answering service will contact me. If you are experiencing a psychiatric emergency and feel that you can't wait for me to return your call, go to the nearest hospital emergency room or call 911. When I plan to be out of town and unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact if necessary.

## PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of your records, or I can prepare a summary for you instead. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. If you wish to see your records, I recommend that you review them in my presence so that we can discuss the contents.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, the law protects the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist, and I can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. However, 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 proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may order my testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it.

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, I must notify the appropriate local or state agency.

If I believe that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am 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.

These situations have rarely occurred in my practice. If such a situation does occur, I will make every effort 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. If you don't object, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I feel that it is important to our work together.

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 at our next meeting. I will be happy to discuss these issues with you if you need specific advice, but formal legal advice may be needed because the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex.

Your signature(s) below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms, including acceptance of financial responsibility for all charges incurred.

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Signature of patient/representative

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Date

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Social Security number

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Signature of patient/representative

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Date

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Social Security number