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CLINICAL SERVICES - POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please note any questions that you might have, as I will be happy to discuss them with you.

PSYCHOTHERAPY

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. There are a number of different approaches that can be utilized to resolve the problems you hope to address. Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Risks sometimes include experiencing uncomfortable feelings or discussing unpleasant aspects of your life. However, research has proven that psychotherapy has benefits for people who undertake it. Therapy often leads to a significant reduction in feelings of distress, better relationships, and resolutions of specific problems. But there are no guarantees for any individual.

Your first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your (or your child's) needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what your work will include, and an initial treatment plan to follow, if you decide to continue. You should evaluate this information along with your own assessment about whether you feel comfortable working with me. If you ever have questions about these procedures, you should feel free to discuss them with me as they arise.

Psychotherapy sessions are typically scheduled for one fifty-minute session (one appointment hour of fifty minutes duration) each week (though other arrangements can be agreed upon).

There are some situations where outside sessions may seem appropriate (such as exposure therapy) and this will be discussed in your therapy session. Typical expectations of therapy should apply, but please note that the same privacy cannot be guaranteed when sessions are held outside the office.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS

Psychological evaluations can provide you with information about you or your child's psychological functioning in a number of areas. This information can then be used by schools, medical doctors or therapists to aid in treatment, or in the planning of programs. It can also be used to point out areas of specific intellectual or emotional strengths that you may be able to capitalize on in the future. However, sometimes test results do not meet our expectations. In particular, this can occur when they reveal serious emotional or intellectual problems, or fail to provide evidence of abilities or disabilities that would allow access to special programs or services. The fact that you are paying for these services does not guarantee any particular test result and you need to be prepared that the findings may not meet your expectations.

Evaluations are normally conducted in one or more sessions lasting from three to six hours, including breaks. These usually follow an initial interview session that is billed separately. The total length of the evaluation will depend on the tests to be administered and you/your child's responses to them. Upon completion of the evaluation I will prepare a comprehensive written report of the findings. Because this written evaluation is highly technical, I will typically arrange a time to give you feedback about the test results directly. This feedback session is billed separately.

CANCELLED, LATE, AND MISSED SESSIONS:

We understand that from time to time clients need to cancel sessions due to schedule conflicts or illness. However, the need to reschedule sessions can lead to scheduling problems for other clients, as well as financial difficulties. For this reason we have maintained the following policy with regard to cancellations:

- 1) Sessions cancelled before 9:00 am the same day as the appointment will NOT be charged a cancellation fee. (Please call my regular contact number to cancel.)
- 2) Sessions cancelled the same day (but after 9:00 am) will be charged a cancellation fee equal to 50% of your regular fee.
- 3) Late arrivals, cancellations within 1 hour or less of the start of the appointment, or "no-shows" will be charged the full fee for the time scheduled.

Furthermore, as a courtesy and in order to maintain session availability for all clients, I request that you make every effort to give more than 24 hours notice. Phone messages can be left 24 hours a day.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

When seeking a psychological evaluation, you will be given an estimate of the total time required and the resultant cost. While we make every effort to accurately estimate the length of time required, this estimate cannot be exact, as the length of the testing process will vary depending on the findings and the examinee's pace. The cost of the evaluation includes not only the time for administering the tests but the hours required to score the measures, interpret the results, prepare a written report, and complete associated phone calls and letters. It does not cover the initial interview, feedback session, ongoing consultation regarding your needs, participation in any legal proceedings arising from the assessment, or any psychotherapeutic treatment of you/your child. Fees for the professional services you will be receiving are further explained in the service contracts.

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

You will be expected to pay for each psychotherapy session at the time it is held, with cash, check, or a credit card. Patients receiving psychological evaluations will be expected to pay ½ the estimated cost on the first day of the evaluation and the remainder before receipt of the report. A copy of the written report will not be released without payment. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to at the time these services are requested.

We do not accept direct insurance reimbursement, though we will provide you with reasonable documentation to obtain such reimbursement on your own. Upon request, we will send you a monthly statement itemizing all services rendered and all payments made during that time, along with additional information needed for insurance reimbursement. We cannot guarantee that any services we provide will or will not be covered by your insurance.

If your account is more than 60 days past due and suitable arrangements for payment have not been agreed to, we have the option of using legal means to secure payment, including collection agencies or small claims court. (If such legal action is necessary, the costs of bringing that proceeding will be included in the claim.) In such cases, the only information we would release about a client's treatment would be the client's name, the nature of the services provided, and the amount due.

OTHER SERVICES

In addition to weekly appointments, it is our practice to charge your hourly fee on a prorated basis for other professional services you may require. These services may include letter writing, telephone conversations which last longer than **15 minutes**, attendance at meetings or consultations with other professionals which you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, or the time required to perform any other service which you may request. If you become involved in litigation in which my participation is required, you will be expected to pay for the professional time required, even if I am compelled to testify by another party. Because of the complexity and time consuming nature of legal involvement, you will be billed twice your typical hourly rate for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding.

CONTACTING YOUR THERAPIST

I may not always be immediately available by telephone. You can leave messages on the general practice phone at (561) 206-4601. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it with the exception of weekends and holidays.

EMERGENCIES

If you cannot reach me by phone, and you feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, you should call the emergency room at the nearest hospital and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. In an emergency, you can also arrange to be taken directly to the emergency room or call 911 for assistance. Please note that if you are receiving web-based therapy that you should contact the emergency numbers in your specific area. If I will be unavailable for an extended period of time, I will provide you with the name of a trusted colleague whom you can contact if necessary.

MINORS

Patients under 18 years of age (who are not legally emancipated) and their parents should be aware that the law may allow parents to examine their child's treatment records. Children between 13 and 17 may independently consent to (and control access to the records of) diagnosis and treatment in a crisis situation. Because privacy in psychotherapy is often crucial to successful progress, and parental involvement is also essential, it is usually our policy to request an agreement with minors and their parents about access to information. This agreement provides that during treatment, I will provide

parents with only general information about the progress of the treatment, and the patient's attendance at scheduled sessions. I may also provide parents with a summary of their child's treatment when it is complete. Other communications are kept to a minimum unless the child is in danger or is a danger to someone else, in which case, the parents will be notified of the concern. Before giving parents any information, the matter will be discussed with the child, if possible, and I will do my best to handle any objections he/she may have.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

The laws and standards of our profession require that we keep Protected Health Information about you in your Clinical Record. Except in unusual circumstances, 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 by untrained readers. For this reason, we 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, you will be charged a copying and administrative fee of \$1.00 per page.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND LIMITS

The law protects the privacy of all communications between a patient and a therapist. In most situations, your therapist can only release information about your treatment to others if you sign a written Authorization form that meets certain legal requirements. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) provides you with several new or expanded rights with regard to your Clinical Records and disclosures of protected health information. These rights are described in my "**Notice of Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information**" which you have received separately.

There are other situations that require only that you provide written, advance consent. Your signature on the attached contract 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 will make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of a patient. The other professionals are also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, these consultations will not be disclosed unless I feel that it is important in our work together. I will note all consultations in your Clinical Record (which is called "PHI" in our 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 in the section marked "**Billing and Payment**"

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that you discuss any questions or concerns that you may have now or in the future. In addition, as a mandated reporter of the state, I must break confidentiality in situations where there is harm or intent of harm towards yourself/your child or towards identified others. For instance, in situations where there may be child abuse, elderly abuse, threat of suicide or threat of homicide.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

If you have any questions regarding these policies or procedures please do not hesitate to discuss them with me further. You will be notified of any changes to these policies in writing. Thank you.