

# Adult - Therapy Informed Consent

## Informed Consent for Psychotherapy

This document contains important information about professional services and business policies at Mission Psychology. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so that you and your treating clinician can discuss them at your next meeting. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and your clinician.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the clinician and patient, and the particular problems you hope to address. There are many different methods available 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 therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things discussed both during sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, so 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. However, there are no guarantees as to what you will experience.

The first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, your clinician will be able to offer you some first impressions of what therapy 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 the clinician. At the end of the evaluation, your clinician will notify you if they believe that they are not the right therapist for you and, if so, will give you referrals to other practitioners whom may be 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 Mission Psychology's procedures, you and your clinician should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, your clinician will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

### MEETINGS

The clinician will normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 2 to 4 sessions. During this time, you and the clinician can decide if the clinician is the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If you and the clinician agree to begin psychotherapy, the clinician will schedule one 45-minute session per week, at a time agreed 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 hours advance notice of cancellation, unless you and the clinician agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control. If it is possible, the clinician will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.

### PROFESSIONAL FEES

The hourly fee is \$275 for the initial intake session and \$165 per hour for other services. If the session or meeting lasts more than the usual time, Mission Psychology will charge accordingly. In addition to weekly appointments, this same hourly rate is charged for other professional services you may need, though Mission Psychology will prorate the hourly cost if the clinician works for periods of less than one hour. Other professional services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 5 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 the clinician.

If you become involved in legal proceedings that require the clinician's participation, you will be expected to pay for any professional time spent on your legal matter, even if the request comes from another party. The charge is \$350 per hour for professional services the clinician is asked or required to perform in relation to your legal matter. A copying fee of \$5 per page is charged for records requests.

### BILLING AND PAYMENTS

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless you and the clinician agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage that requires another arrangement. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when such services are requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, the clinician may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan.

If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, Mission Psychology has the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, the costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information released regarding a patient's treatment is his/her name, the dates, times, and nature of services provided, and the amount due.

### INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT

In order for you and your clinician 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. Mission Psychology will fill out forms and provide you with assistance so you can 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, Mission Psychology will provide you with whatever information it can based on experience and will be happy to help you in understanding the information you receive from your insurance company. If necessary, Mission Psychology is willing to call the insurance company on your behalf to obtain clarification.

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 clinicians to provide services to you once your benefits end. If this is the case, Mission Psychology 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 the clinician provide them with your clinical diagnosis. Sometimes Mission Psychology will 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, Mission Psychology has 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. Mission Psychology will provide you with a copy of any records submitted, if you request it. **You understand that, by using your insurance, you authorize Mission Psychology to release such information to your insurance company. Mission Psychology will try to keep that information limited to the minimum necessary.**

Once you have provided all of the information about your insurance coverage, you and the clinician will discuss what can be expected 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 services yourself to avoid the problems described above (unless prohibited by the insurance contract).

#### CONTACTING THE CLINICIAN

The clinician is usually not immediately available by telephone. While clinicians are usually in the office between 9 AM and 5 PM, they probably will not answer the phone when with a patient. When unavailable, the clinician's telephone is answered by voice mail that they monitor, or by Mission Psychology's administrative support team who knows where to reach the clinician. The clinician 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 your clinician of some times when you will be available. If you are unable to reach your clinician and feel that you cannot wait for them to return your call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. If the clinician will be unavailable for an extended time, they will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

Many methods of electronic communication are not confidential. Please review Mission Psychology's policy for electronic communication. It is available on the Mission Psychology website and a paper version is available at the front desk.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS Records of your therapy sessions will be kept by the clinician. You are entitled to receive a copy of your records. If the clinician believes that it would be emotionally damaging for you to see them, they will arrange with you to send the records to a mental health professional of your choice. It is recommended that you review records with your clinician so that you can discuss the contents. A reasonable fee for copies of records is charged.

#### SUPERVISION

Mission Psychology employs some clinicians who have graduated from their respective degree programs and are currently accruing clinical hours and additional training for licensure. Clinicians completing supervision requirements are identified as postdoctoral fellows or LPC-Associates and identify their supervisors in all clinical documentation and on the Mission Psychology website. These clinicians meet with a licensed supervisor in their field to discuss cases on a weekly basis and consult their supervisors as needed. These clinicians are practicing under their supervisor's clinical license and will discuss their

supervision status in your first appointment.

### CONFIDENTIALITY [for adult patients]

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist or clinician is protected by law, and information about your treatment can only be released to others with your written permission. However, there are a few exceptions.

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

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

If the clinician believes that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another person, the clinician 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, the clinician 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 your treatment, the clinician will attempt to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

The clinician may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, the clinician will make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of the patient. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. Ordinarily, the clinician will not tell you about these consultations unless they believe that it is important to your 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 you and your clinician discuss any questions or concerns that you may have at your next meeting. The clinician will be happy to discuss these issues with you and provide clarification when possible. However, if you need specific clarification or advice the clinician is unable to provide, formal legal advice may be needed, as the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex and the clinicians at Mission Psychology are not attorneys. If you request, Mission Psychology will provide you with relevant portions or summaries of the state laws regarding these issues.

### TELEPSYCHOLOGY

Telepsychology refers to providing psychotherapy services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telepsychology is that the client and clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location. This can be helpful in ensuring continuity of care if the client or clinician moves to a different location, takes an extended vacation, or is otherwise unable to continue to meet in person. It is also more convenient and takes less time. Telepsychology, however, requires technical competence on both your and the clinician's parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telepsychology, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and telepsychology, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Since telepsychology sessions take place outside of the clinician's private office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. On the clinician's end, they will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. But it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for your session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of your session on your cell phone or other device. You should participate in therapy only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear the conversation.
- Issues related to technology. There are many ways that technology issues might impact telepsychology. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to your private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, clinicians will not engage in telepsychology with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in telepsychology, you and your clinician will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of your telepsychology work.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that telepsychology is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, some clinicians believe that something is lost by not being in the same room. For example, there is debate about a clinician's ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely.

## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

You and your clinician will decide together which kind of telepsychology service to use. You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use telepsychology services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telepsychology.

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

**Signature of Client**

**Date**

**Name of Client**

First

Last

**Signature of Parent/Guardian (If Applicable)**

**Date**

**Name of Parent/Guardian (If Applicable)**

First

Last