

## **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 is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and client, and the particular problems you bring forward. 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 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 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 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

psychotherapy is begun, I will usually schedule one 45- to 50-minute session (one appointment hour of 45 to 50 minutes duration) 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 hours advance notice of cancellation. *If you are unable to keep your appointment and fail to provide 24 hours advanced notice, you will be charged the full hourly fee listed below*, unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to an emergency or unforeseen circumstances beyond your control. Please be aware that this cancellation fee is not covered by insurance.

### **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

My hourly fee is \$130 for individual psychotherapy. This rate may increase periodically; prior notice will be provided well in advance of any rate increase. In addition to weekly appointments, I charge this same hourly fee for other professional services you may need, though I will break down the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 15 minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or 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 my professional time even if I am called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge \$250 per hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding.

### **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. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I 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, 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. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information I release regarding a client's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

## **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.

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. It may also be the case that an insurance company may refuse payment for services they previously pre-certified or authorized. In this event, it is up to the client to contact the insurance company to appeal for payment.

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. I will provide you with a copy of any report I submit, if you request it.

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 during the day into the early evening, I probably will not answer the phone when I am with a client. When I am unavailable, my telephone will automatically be directed to my confidential voicemail, where you can leave me a message. 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 you do not receive a call back from me in 36 hours, please leave another message, as there may have been an issue with message retrieval in the voicemail system. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you are in crisis and can't wait for me to return your call, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychiatrist on call. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

Some clients prefer to be in contact via email. Please be aware that email is not completely secure or confidential, so please do not email me content related to your therapy sessions. If you choose to communicate with me by email, be aware that all emails 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 emails I receive from you and any responses that I send to you become a part of your legal record. Ideally, email should be used for administrative issues, such as appointment scheduling. Similar to the telephone, I am often not immediately available via email. Every effort will be made to return emails within 24 hours. If for some reason you do not receive an email response from me within 48 hours, please re-send your email, as the email transmission may have been lost.

### **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. Clients will be

charged an appropriate fee for any professional time spent in responding to and/or preparing information requests.

## **MINORS**

If you are under eighteen years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents the right to examine your treatment records. It is my policy to request an agreement from parents that they agree to give up access to your records. If they agree, I will provide them only with general information about our work together, unless I feel there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or someone else. In this case, I will notify them of my concern. I will also provide them with a summary of your treatment when it is complete. Before giving them any information, I will discuss the matter with you, if possible, and do my best to handle any objections you may have with what I am prepared to discuss.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In general, the law protects the privacy of all communications between a client and a psychologist, 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 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 client's treatment. For example, if I believe that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused, I must file a report with the appropriate state agency.

If I believe that a client 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 client. If the client 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 a similar situation occurs, 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 client. 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, and I am not an attorney.

### **NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES (Brief Version)**

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

#### **My commitment to your privacy**

My practice (Jennifer L. Trotter, Ph.D., PLLC) is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your personal health information as part of providing professional care. I am also required by law to keep your information private. These laws are complicated, but I must give you this important information. This is a shorter version of full, legally required notice of privacy practices (NPP). You can request a copy of this full NPP from me, or you can review the copy posted in my office.

#### **How I use and disclose your protected health information with your consent**

I will use the information I collect about you mainly to provide you with treatment, to arrange payment for our services, and for some other business activities that are called, in the law, health care operations. After you have read this notice I will ask you to sign a consent form to let me use and share your information in these ways. If you do not consent and sign this form, I cannot treat you. If I want to use or send, share, or release your information for other purposes I will discuss this with you and ask you to sign an authorization form to allow this.

#### **Disclosing your health information without your consent**

There are some times when the laws require me to use or share your information. For example:

1. When there is a serious threat to your or another's health and safety or to the public. I will only share information with persons who are able to help prevent or reduce the threat.
2. When I am required to do so by lawsuits and other legal or court proceedings.
3. If a law enforcement official requires me to do so.
4. For workers' compensation and similar benefit programs.

There are some other rare situations. They are described in the longer version of our notice of privacy practices.

### **Your rights regarding your health information**

1. You can ask me to communicate with you in a particular way or at a certain place that is more private for you. For example, you can ask me to call you at home, and not at work, to schedule or cancel an appointment. I will try my best to do as you ask.
2. You can ask me to limit what I tell people involved in your care or the payment for your care, such as family members and friends.
3. You have the right to look at the health information I have about you, such as your medical and billing records. You can get a copy of these records, but we may charge you for it. Contact me to arrange how to see your records. See below.
4. If you believe that the information in your records is incorrect or missing something important, you can ask me to make additions to your records to correct the situation. You have to make this request in writing and send it to me. You must also tell me the reasons you want to make the changes. However, I have the right to deny your request under certain circumstances.
5. You have the right to a copy of this notice. If I change this notice, I will post the new version in the waiting area, and you can always get a copy of it from me.
6. You have the right to file a complaint if you believe your privacy rights have been violated. You can file a complaint with me and with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. All complaints must be in writing. Filing a complaint will not change the health care I provide to you in any way.

Also, you may have other rights that are granted to you by the laws of our state, and these may be the same as or different from the rights described above. I will be happy to discuss these situations with you now or as they arise. If you have any questions regarding this notice or my health information privacy policies, please contact me at 248-880-4966.

Effective date of this notice is 09/01/2009.

## CONSENT TO TREATMENT

I acknowledge that I have received, have read (or have had read to me), and understand the Outpatient Services Contract and/or other information about the therapy I am considering. I have had all my questions answered fully.

I do hereby seek and consent to take part in the treatment with Jennifer L. Trotter, Ph.D., PLLC. I understand that developing a treatment plan with this therapist and regularly reviewing our work toward meeting the treatment goals are in my best interest. I agree to play an active role in this process.

I understand that no promises have been made to me as to the results of treatment or of any procedures provided by this therapist.

I am aware that I may stop my treatment with this therapist at any time. The only thing I will still be responsible for is paying for the services I have already received. I understand that I may lose other services or may have to deal with other problems if I stop treatment.

I understand that if I am using insurance for which the therapist is an in-network provider, I will be responsible for the copay and any deductible. If I am using an out-of-network insurance carrier, paying out of pocket or my insurance benefits have been exceeded, my fee has been set at \$\_\_\_\_\_ per session. I know that I must call to cancel an appointment at least 24 hours before the time of the appointment. If I do not cancel or I do not show up, I will be charged the full session fee for that appointment. I realize that insurance will not cover appointments for which I do not show up or cancel with less than 24 hours notice.

I am aware that an agent of my insurance company or other third-party payer may be given information about the type(s), cost(s), date(s), and providers of any services or treatments I receive. I understand that if payment for the services I receive here is not made, the therapist may stop my treatment.

My signature below shows that I understand and abide by the information provided in the Outpatient Services Contract.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of client (or person acting for client)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to client (if necessary)

I, the therapist, have discussed the issues above with the client (and/or his or her parent, guardian, or other representative). My observations of this person's behavior and responses give me no reason to believe that this person is not fully competent to give informed and willing consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer L. Trotter, Ph.D., Therapist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Copy accepted by client     Copy kept by therapist

