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Welcome to my practice. This document (the Agreement) contains important information about my professional services and business policies. It also contains summary information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), a federal law that provides privacy protections and patient rights, with regard to the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) used for the purpose of treatment, payment, and health care operations. HIPAA requires that I provide you with a Notice of Privacy Practices (the Notice) for use and disclosure of PHI for treatment, payment and health care operations. The Notice, which is attached to this Agreement, explains HIPAA and its application to your personal health information in greater detail. The following information summarizes HIPAA. The law requires that I obtain your signature acknowledging that I have provided you with this information at the end of this session. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you read them carefully before our next session. We can discuss any questions you have about the procedures at that time. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. You may revoke this Agreement in writing at any time. The revocation will be binding on me unless I have taken action in reliance on it. If there are obligations imposed on me by your health insurer in order to process or substantiate claims made under your policy, or if you have not satisfied any financial obligations you have incurred.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES:

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the Social Worker and patient, and the particular problems you are experiencing. 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 to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our session 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 many benefits. 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 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 up to two 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 50-minute session (one appointment hour of 50 minutes duration) per week at a time we agree on.

#### PROFESSIONAL FEES:

My hourly fee is \$ . I charge this amount 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 5 minutes, consulting with other professionals with your permission, 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 all of my professional time, including preparation and transportation costs, 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 proceedings.

If I am in-network with your insurance provider, I charge only your co-pay if there is one and accept assignment of what the insurance provider pays.

#### CONTACTING ME;

I am in the office on Mondays and Wednesdays afternoons and evenings only. I am often not immediately available by telephone. I do not answer the phone when I am with a client, except in unusual circumstances. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by confidential voice mail. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day receiving it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you do not hear from me within 2 business days, please call again. If you are difficult to reach, please inform me of some times when you will be available. My phone number confidential phone number is 919-265-9711. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you can't wait for me to return your call, call 911, contact your family physician, your psychiatrist, or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist, social worker, or psychiatrist on call. Some people find the Holly Hill Respond Line at 250-7000 helpful in a situation which may require hospitalization. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary. When I am on vacation, the names of an on-call therapist(s) will be available to you.

#### LIMITS ON CONFIDENTIALITY:

Please see Informed Consent for Service Agreement.

In addition, there are some situations where I am permitted or required to disclose information without either your consent or authorization:

If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning the

professional services that I provided you, such information is protected by the social work-patient privilege law. I cannot provide any information without your written authorization, or a court order. If you are involved and/or in a contemplating litigation, you should consult with your attorney to determine whether a court would be likely to order me to disclose information.

If a government agency is requesting the information for health oversight activities, I may be required to provide it for them.

If a patient files a complaint or lawsuit against me, I may disclose relevant information regarding that patient in order to defend myself.

If a patient files a worker's compensation claim, and my services are being compensated through workers compensation benefits, I must, upon appropriate request, provide a copy of the patient's record to the patient's employer or the North Carolina Industrial Commission.

While this written summary of exceptions and the Informed Consent for Service 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 now or in the future. The laws governing confidentiality can be quite complex and I am not an attorney. In situations where specific advice is required, formal legal advice may be needed.

## PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

You should be aware that, pursuant to HIPAA, I keep Protected Health Information about you in two sets of professional records. One set constitutes your Clinical Records. It includes information about your reasons for seeking therapy, a description of the ways in which your problem impacts on your life, your diagnosis, the goals that we set for treatment, your progress towards those goals, your medical and social history, your treatment history, any past treatment records that I receive from other providers, reports of any professional consultations, your billing records, and any reports that have been sent to anyone, including reports to your insurance carrier. Except in unusual circumstances that involve

danger to yourself and/or others or the record makes reference to another person (unless such other person is a health care provider) and I believe that access is reasonably likely to cause substantial harm to such other person, you may examine and/or receive a copy of your Clinical Records, if you request it in writing. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, I 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, I am allowed to charge a copying fee of \$ per page (and for certain other expenses). The exception to this policy are contained in the attached Notice Form.

In addition, I also keep a set of Psychotherapy Notes. These Notes are for my own use and are designed to assist me in providing you with the best treatment. While the contents of Psychotherapy Notes vary from client to client, they can include the contents of our conversations, my analysis of those conversations, and how they impact on your therapy. They also contain particularly sensitive information that you may reveal to me that is not required to be included in your Clinical Record. These Psychotherapy Notes are kept separate from your Clinical Record. Your Psychotherapy Notes are not available to you and cannot be sent to anyone else, including insurance companies without your written signed Authorization. Insurance companies cannot require your Authorization as a condition of coverage nor penalize you in any way for your refusal to provide it.

## PATIENTS RIGHTS

HIPAA provides you with several new or expanded rights with regard to your Clinical Records and disclosures of protected health information. These rights include requesting that I amend your record, requesting restrictions on what information from your Clinical Records is disclosed to others, requesting an accounting of most disclosures of protected health information that you have neither consented to nor authorized, determine the location to which protected information disclosures are sent, having any complaints you make about my policies and procedures recorded in your records, and the right to a paper copy of this Agreement, the attached notice form, and my privacy policies and

procedures, I am happy to discuss any of these rights with you.

#### MINORS AND PARENTS

Parents under 18 years of age who are not emancipated and their parents should be aware that the law may allow parents to examine their child's treatment records. Because privacy in psychotherapy is often crucial to successful progress, particularly with teenagers, it is usually my policy to request an agreement from parents that they consent to give up their access to the child's records. If they agree, during treatment, I will provide them only with general information about the progress of their child's treatment. And his/her attendance at scheduled sessions. Any other communication will require the child's Authorization unless I feel that the child is in danger or is a danger to someone else, in which case, I will notify the parents of my concern. Before giving parents any information, I will discuss the matter with the child, if possible, and do my best to handle any objections he/she may have.

#### 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 requires another arrangement. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested.

#### INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENTS

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 and I am in-network, I will accept assignment from them as to the agreed upon fee and co-pay (if applicable). If I am out-of-network, I will fill out forms and provide you with reasonable assistance 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 company literature 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.

Due to 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 that they need more services after the insurance benefits end. If this is the case, I will assist you in finding another provider who will help you continue your psychotherapy.

You should be aware that your contract with your health insurance company requires that I provide it with information relevant to the services that I provide to you. I am required to provide a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes I am required to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of your entire Clinical Records. In such situations, I will make every effort to release only the minimum information about you that is necessary for the purpose requested. 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 information with a national medical information databank. I will provide you with a copy of any report I submit, if you request it. By signing this Agreement, you agree that I can provide requested information to your carrier.

Once we have all of the information about your insurance coverage, we may 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 your 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 contract.

YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ THIS AGREEMENT AND AGREE TO ITS TERMS AND ALSO SERVES AS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED THE HIPAA NOTICE FORM DESCRIBED ABOVE.

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Name

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Date Signed