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PSYCHOTHERAPY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Welcome to my practices. 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.

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 hope to address.

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, and loneliness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been demonstrated 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. 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.

Fees and Payments

Fee Rate: The charge for each therapy meeting will be at the rate of \$_____per 45 minute session. Additional fees will be arranged if you should require me to spend an unusual amount of time on auxiliary services such as consultation with other professionals, preparation for testimony or telephone calls over five minutes. These services will be charged at the standard rate. Fees for psychological testing are based on time with the patient plus time required for scoring and interpreting test data. For sessions conducted anywhere other than the office, travel time plus expenses will be charged at the standard fee.

Payment Method: Payment is requested at the time of services unless we agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage which requires another arrangement. In

these situations, co-payments and non allowable charges are requested at the time of service. Payment may be made by check or cash.

Statements: If psychotherapy/consultation is scheduled on a regular and ongoing basis, clients may request monthly statements/payments. When monthly statements are rendered, payment is expected within 10 days of receipt of statement.

Past Due Accounts: Processing past due accounts is expensive (supply costs, postage, bookkeeping services, etc.) A **\$25 rebilling charge** will be added to all accounts with overdue balances (unpaid charges older than 60 days) unless other arrangements have been made. All overdue accounts (**unpaid after 90 days**) will be submitted to a collection agency. If such action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information I release regarding a patient's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

Cancellation Policy: **If an appointment is cancelled or missed without 24 hours notice, you will be billed for the entire session, except in extreme emergencies. The missed appointment cannot be billed to your insurance as that is considered insurance fraud.**

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 may provide some coverage for mental health treatment. As a general policy, I accept insurance assignments only when necessary and request that my patients pay me directly. If you have insurance coverage for psychological services, the office will be happy to assist you in filing for reimbursement. 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 service your insurance policy covers.

You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health service. 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 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 HMO's and PPO's 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 a

lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, some people feel that 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, 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 between 10AM and 6PM Monday through Thursday, I probably will not answer the phone as I am consultation with another patient. My telephone is answered by a voicemail system 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. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you can't wait for me to return your call, please contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or 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.

Thank you for taking the time to read these policies and procedures. A clear understanding will minimize the interference of these issues in our work together.

I understand and agree to the above policies.

Signature _____ Date _____

Address _____

Phone _____