

Welcome to *Affinity Counseling Center, LLC*

Information and Consent for Services

This document contains important information regarding our counseling relationship. If you have any questions, I will gladly discuss them with you.

THERAPY BENEFITS AND RISKS

The goal of psychotherapy is to assist you in finding solutions for difficulties you might be facing which may be limiting to life satisfaction. Therapy may help you cope better with the feelings and challenges that you, your child or your family are encountering in daily life. Most people benefit from therapy. It often leads to a reduction of feelings of distress, better relationships, and resolutions to specific problems. At times, you may have temporary periods of emotional distress. If you feel that you are not making reasonable progress or have questions about the progress, please discuss this with your therapist. You always have the right to choose whether or not to continue in therapy. The length of treatment depends on your individual needs and the rate of your progress toward agreed upon goals.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The law protects the privacy of communications between a client and a therapist. In most situations, therapists can only release information about your treatment to others if you sign a written authorization form consenting for treatment that meets certain legal requirements imposed by HIPAA. There are other situations that require that you provide a signed release of information. Please be aware that communication via email or texts is not secure, so be mindful of any information provided this way. I do not use email for communication other than for scheduling and business related information.

There are some situations where therapists are permitted or required to disclose information without either your consent or authorization, such as:

- Therapists occasionally find it helpful to consult other health and mental health professionals about a case. During a consultation, every effort is made to avoid revealing the identity of each client. The other professionals are also legally bound to keep the information confidential.
- Some protected information may need to be shared with other agency individuals for both clinical and administrative purposes, such as scheduling, billing and quality assurance. All mental health professionals and administrative staff are bound by the same rules of confidentiality.
- Disclosures required by health insurers or to collect overdue fees.
- If a client threatens to harm himself/herself, therapists may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.
- If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning professional services, such information is protected by the therapist-client privilege law. Therapists cannot provide any information without written authorization or a court order. If a client is involved in, or contemplating litigation, you should

consult with your attorney to determine whether a court would be likely to order a therapist to disclose information.

- If a government agency is requesting the information for health oversight activities, therapists may be required to provide it for them.
- If a client files a complaint or lawsuit against a therapist, relevant information regarding that client may be disclosed in order to defend myself.
- If a client files a worker's compensation claim, and a therapist is providing treatment related to the claim, the therapist must, upon appropriate request, furnish copies of all medical reports and bills.

There are some situations in which therapists are legally obligated to take actions, which are necessary to attempt to protect others or client from harm.

- If a therapist might have reason to believe that a child has been abused, the law requires that they file a report with Department of Family and Children's Services. Once such a report is filed, additional information may be required.
- If a therapist has reasonable cause to believe that a disabled adult or elder person has been abused, they are required to report that to the appropriate agency. Once such a report is filed, additional information may be required.
- If a therapist determines that a client presents a serious danger of violence to another, they may be required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, and/or contacting the police, and/or seeking hospitalization for the client.

If such a situation arises, every effort will be made to fully discuss it with you before taking any action and disclosure will be limited to what is necessary. Please feel free to discuss any concerns or questions you may have about confidentiality.

MINORS & PARENTS

Clients under 18 years of age, who are not emancipated, and their parents should be aware that the law allows parents to examine their child's treatment records unless we believe that doing so would endanger the child or we (client, therapist and parents) agree to do otherwise. Because privacy in psychotherapy is often crucial to successful progress, particularly with teenagers, it is sometimes our policy to request agreements from parents that they consent to give up their access to their child's records. If parents agree, during treatment we will provide them only with general information about the progress of the child's treatment and his/her attendance at scheduled sessions. Any other communication will require the child's authorization, unless we feel that the child is in danger or is a danger to someone else. If that be the case, the therapist will notify the parents of their concern. Before giving parents any information, your therapist will discuss matters with the child, if possible, and do their best to handle any of their objections.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

Professional records, which provide pertinent information regarding each client is maintained by the agency. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, we recommend

that you initially review them in the presence of your therapist, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional so you can discuss the contents. In most situations, we charge a copying fee of 25 cents per page.

APPOINTMENTS

Each therapy appointment is traditionally 45-50 minutes in length, unless specially arranged by the therapist.

If you must cancel your appointment, please call the center at least **24 hours in advance** of your scheduled appointment. **A late cancellation charge of \$50.00 may be made to you for the time that was reserved for your appointment. Additionally a missed appointment fee is \$50.00** and is not covered by insurance companies or Medicaid. We reserve the right to terminate treatment with a client for failure to no show for two appointments.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

The hourly fee for services varies with each clinician and therapy service. Your therapist will discuss this with you prior to the initial session.

Payment for services are made at the conclusion of each session. This includes insurance co-pays and regular fees. We currently accept payment by cash, check or credit. If your check is returned, you will be responsible to pay the original amount due plus a \$20 processing fee. Should the fee not be paid, no further sessions will be scheduled until the balance is paid and/or payment arrangements have been made with your therapist.

INSURANCE

Your therapist may be a provider for a managed care company. Please check with your therapist to determine if using your insurance is an option. 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. **Verifying your insurance benefits is your responsibility.** Managed Health Care plans such as HMO's often require authorization before they provide reimbursement for mental health services. **If your insurance company denies payment for services, you will be responsible for what is not covered.**

TELEPHONE CALLS

Each therapist has their own policy regarding after hours and emergency calls. Please be sure to discuss this with your therapist. Phone calls beyond 10 minutes are subject to be prorated at the usual fee per session. If you feel you have an emergency and you are unable to contact your therapist, please dial 911 immediately.

MEDICAL FORMS/PROGRESS REPORTS/ADDITIONAL FEES

There is a \$10.00 per page charge for any request for forms needed for work or school. There is a \$50.00 charge for any request for a formal progress report. Please give a seven day notice for any forms or reports needed. I am not trained in doing court evaluations (this requires special training). If I am subpoenaed on your behalf, there will be an hourly charge of \$150.00 that is not covered by your insurance.