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HIPAA

MARYLAND NOTICE FORM

Notice of Psychologist's Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of the Patient's Health Information: THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

I. Uses and Disclosures for Treatment, Payment, and Health Care Operations

I may use or disclose your protected health information (PHI), for treatment, payment, and health care operations purposes with your written authorization. To help clarify these terms, here are some definitions:

"PHI" refers to information in your health record that could identify you.

"Treatment, Payment, and Health Care Operations:"

- Treatment is when I provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and other services related to your health care. An example of treatment would be when I consult with another health care provider, such as your family physician or another psychologist.

- Payment is when I obtain reimbursement for your healthcare. Examples of payment are when I disclose your PHI to your health insurer to obtain reimbursement for your health care or to determine eligibility or coverage.

- Health Care Operations are activities that relate to the performance and operation of my practice. Examples of health care operations are quality assessment and improvement

activities, business-related matters such as audits and administrative services, and case management and care coordination.

"Use" applies only to activities within my office or practice group, such as sharing, employing, applying, utilizing, examining, and analyzing information that identifies you.

“Disclosure” applies to activities outside of my [office, clinic, practice group, etc.], such as releasing, transferring, or providing access to information about you to other parties.

“Authorization” is your written permission to disclose confidential mental health information. All authorizations to disclose must be on a specific legally required form.

II. Other Uses and Disclosures Requiring Authorization

I may use or disclose PHI for purposes outside of treatment, payment, or health care operations when your appropriate authorization is obtained. In those instances when I am asked for information for purposes outside of treatment, payment, or health care operations, I will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. I will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your Psychotherapy Notes. “Psychotherapy Notes” are notes I have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which I have kept separate from the rest of your medical record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI.

You may revoke all such authorizations (of PHI or Psychotherapy Notes) at any time, provided each revocation is in writing. You may not revoke an authorization to the extent that (1) I have relied on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage, law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

III. Uses and Disclosures without Authorization

I may use or disclose PHI without your consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

Child Abuse – If I have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, I must report this belief to the appropriate authorities.

Adult and Domestic Abuse – I may disclose protected health information regarding you if I reasonably believe that you are a victim of abuse, neglect, self-neglect or exploitation.

Health Oversight Activities – If I receive a subpoena from the Maryland Board of Examiners of Psychologists because they are investigating my practice, I must disclose any PHI requested by the Board.

Judicial and Administrative Proceedings – If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your diagnosis and treatment or the

records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I will not release information without your written authorization or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated or a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.

Serious Threat to Health or Safety – If you communicate to me a specific threat of imminent harm against another individual or if I believe that there is clear, imminent risk of physical or mental injury being inflicted against another individual, I may make disclosures that I believe are necessary to protect that individual from harm. If I believe that you present an imminent, serious risk of physical or mental injury or death to yourself, I may make disclosures I consider necessary to protect you from harm.

IV. Patient's Rights and Psychologist's Duties Patient's Rights:

Right to Request Restrictions – You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information. However, I am not required to agree to a restriction you request.

Right to Receive Confidential Communications by Alternative Means and at Alternative Locations – You have the right to request and receive confidential communications of PHI by alternative means and at alternative locations. For example, you may not want a family member to know that you are seeing me. On your request, I will send your bills to another address.

Right to Inspect and Copy – You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of PHI in my mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases you may have this decision reviewed. You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of Psychotherapy Notes unless I believe the disclosure of the record will be injurious to your health. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process for both PHI and Psychotherapy Notes.

Right to Amend – You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your request. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the amendment process.

Right to an Accounting – You generally have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of PHI. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.

Right to a Paper Copy - You have the right to obtain a paper copy of the notice from me upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.

Psychologist's Duties:

I am required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of my legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.

I reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless I notify you of such changes, however, I am required to abide by the terms currently in effect.

If I revise my policies and procedures, I will inform current patients of revision by telephone or post.

V. Complaints: If you are concerned that I have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision I made about access to your records, you may contact me by telephone or post.

You may also send a written complaint to:

Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Secretary,
Hubert Humphrey Bldg
2000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
W., D.C. 20201 (tel) 202 690-7000

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions, and Changes to Privacy Policy: This notice will go into effect on April 14, 2003.

I reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that I maintain. I will provide you with a revised notice by telephone or post.

PSYCHOTHERAPIST-PATIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT

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 new 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 you are provided 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 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. That 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 psychologist 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 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 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 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 one to four 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 – 50 minute

session 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 (1 day) notice of cancellation (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control). If it is possible, I will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment. It is important to note that insurance companies do not provide reimbursement for cancelled sessions.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

My fee is \$175 per session; the initial intake is \$200. In addition to weekly appointments, I charge this amount for other professional services you may need, though I may break down the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other services may include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 15 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 each hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding.

CONTACTING ME

Due to my work schedule, I am often not immediately available by telephone. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by a voice mail answering service that I frequently monitor. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays, and when I am away on travel. In your message, please inform me of some times when you will be available, and always leave your phone number. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, the answering system will provide the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

In a crisis, you can try me as indicated on the telephone system. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you can't wait for a return call, contact your physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. If you experience a life-threatening emergency, go to the nearest hospital emergency room and request to be seen by the mental health professional.

LIMITS ON CONFIDENTIALITY

The law protects the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist. In most situations, I can only release information about your treatment to others if you sign a written Authorization form that meets certain legal requirements imposed by HIPAA and/or Maryland law. However, in the following situations, no authorization is required:

- I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other health and mental health professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my patient. The other professionals are 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. I will note all consultations in your Clinical Record (which is called "PHI" in my Notice of

Psychologist's Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information).

- You should be aware that I practice with other mental health professionals and that I employ administrative staff. In most cases, I need to share protected information with these individuals for both clinical and administrative purposes, such as billing and quality assurance. All mental health professionals are bound by the same rules of confidentiality. Any staff I employ have been given training about protecting your privacy and have agreed not to release any information outside of the practice without the permission of a professional staff member.
- Disclosures required by health insurers or to collect overdue fees are discussed elsewhere in this Agreement.
- If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning your diagnosis and treatment, such information is protected by the psychologist-patient privilege law. I cannot provide any information without your written authorization, or a court order. If you are involved in or 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.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take actions, which I believe are necessary to attempt to protect others from harm and I may have to reveal some information about a patient's treatment. These situations are unusual in my practice.

If I have reason to believe that a child or vulnerable adult has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or that a vulnerable adult has been subjected to self-neglect, or exploitation, the law requires that I file a report with the appropriate government agency, usually the local office of the Department of Social Services. Once such a report is filed, I may be required to provide additional information.

If I know that a patient has a propensity for violence and the patient indicates that he/she has the intention to inflict imminent physical injury upon a specified victim(s), I may be required to take protective actions. These actions may include establishing and undertaking a treatment plan that is calculated to eliminate the possibility that the patient will carry out the threat, seeking hospitalization of the patient and/or informing the potential victim or the police about the threat.

If I believe that there is an imminent risk that a patient will inflict serious physical harm or death on him/herself, or that immediate disclosure is required to provide for the patient's emergency health care needs, I may be required to take appropriate protective actions, including initiating hospitalization and/or notifying family members or others who can protect the patient. If such a situation arises, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action and I will limit my disclosure to what is necessary.

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 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

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep Protected Health Information about you in your Clinical Record. Except in unusual circumstances that disclosure is reasonably likely to endanger the life or physical safety of you or another person, you may examine and/or receive a copy of your Clinical Record, if you request it in writing. In those situations, you have a right to a summary and to have your record sent to another mental health provider. 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 (\$0.60 per page) and \$16.00 preparation fee. If I refuse your request for access to your records, you have a right of review, which I will discuss with you upon request.

PATIENT 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; determining 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 & PARENTS

Patients under 16 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. While privacy in psychotherapy is very important, particularly with teenagers, parental involvement is also essential to successful treatment. Therefore, it is usually my policy to request an agreement from any patient between 16 and 18 and his/her parents allowing me to share general information about the progress of treatment and their child's attendance at scheduled sessions. I will also provide parents with a summary of their child's treatment when it is complete. 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.

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 which will require me to disclose otherwise confidential information. 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. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim.

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.

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 insurance benefits end. Some managed-care plans will not allow me to provide services to you once your benefits end. If this is the case, I will do my best to find another provider who will help you continue your psychotherapy.

You should also 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. Maryland permits me to send some information without your consent in order to file appropriate claims. I am required to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes I am required to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of your entire Clinical Record. In such situations, I will make every effort to release only the minimum information about you that is necessary for the purpose requested. Maryland law prevents insurers from making unreasonable demands for information, but there are no specific

guidelines about what unreasonable includes. If I believe that your health insurance company is requesting an unreasonable amount of information, I will call it to your attention and we can discuss what to do. You can instruct me not to send requested information, but this could result in claims not being paid and an additional financial burden being placed on you. Once the insurance company has this information, it 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. 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 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 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.

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I, _____, have read, understand, and accept the policies described in the agreement. The fee for which I agree to assume responsibility is:

\$200.00 for initial session

\$175.00 per psychotherapy session

YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ THIS "AGREEMENT" DOCUMENT AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY ITS TERMS AND ALSO SERVES AS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED THE HIPAA NOTICE.

_____ signature of patient

or authorized representative

date _____

_____ signature of parent of a minor child

date _____