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## Informed Consent for Psychotherapy

Welcome to Horizon Behavioral Health (HBH). This document contains important information about professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and make notes of any questions you might have so that they can be discussed. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and your provider.

## Psychological Services

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements and varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient, and the particular problems you bring forward. There are many different methods that may be used 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 therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things discussed both during 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, anger, guilt, 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.

The first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, your provider will be able to offer you some first impressions of what the work is anticipated to include and a treatment plan will 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 your therapist. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have any questions about procedures, please discuss them with your therapist whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, your therapist will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another behavioral health professional for a second opinion or referral.

## Meetings

Typically, an evaluation is conducted in one to three sessions during which time you and your provider can both decide if the therapist is the best person to provide the service you need in order to meet your treatment goals. Sessions are usually scheduled weekly and last 45 to 50 minutes, which is considered one therapy hour. Sessions can be more frequent, as indicated and agreed upon. Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 48 hours advance notice of cancellation, unless you and your provider both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control. If possible, your therapist will reschedule your appointment.

## Professional Fees

The initial intake fee is \$200 and the rate for follow up sessions are \$175 (55 minute therapy sessions), \$150 (45 minute therapy sessions), and \$100 (30 minute therapy sessions). In addition to weekly appointments, providers will charge \$200 per hour for other professional services you may need. Other services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than five minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, and time spent performing any other service you may request. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require your therapist's participation, you will be expected to pay for professional time even if the provider is called to testify by another party. Because of difficulty of legal involvement, there will be an hourly charge for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding. The rate for group psychotherapy is \$50 per hour.

### Billing and Payments

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. The fee for failing to contact the clinic to cancel or reschedule your appointment less than 48 hours prior to your appointment is \$60. If you fail to show or contact the clinic at all, you may be charged the entire fee. If late cancellations or no shows occur repeatedly, you will be removed from our schedule. You are welcome to return to treatment when you can commit to keeping your appointments, pending availability.

If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, the clinic has 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 released regarding a patient's treatment is the patient's name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

We also require that you have a credit card on file, which will not be charged unless you request to make payment by this method or fail to settle your account in a timely manner by other means. This payment method will also be used in the event you fail to honor the cancellation policy.

### 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 health insurance, it will usually provide some coverage for behavioral health treatment. HBH employs a billing company to assist with insurance payments. You (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of charged fees. It is very important that you find out exactly what services your insurance policy covers. The billing company and your provider will make an honest effort to prepare material for your insurance.

If you have questions about your coverage, call your plan; there is typically a number on the back of your insurance card. Your therapist and other staff will be happy to provide you with information based on their experience and help you understand the information you receive from your insurance company. If it is necessary to clear confusion, the provider or billing company will be willing to call the insurance on your behalf.

Due to the rising costs of health care, insurance benefits have become increasingly complex. It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how much coverage is available. It may be necessary to

request an authorization to initiate services or an approval for more therapy sessions. While a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, some patients feel that they need more services after insurance benefits end.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize your therapist to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes additional clinical information is required such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies the entire record (although this is rare). 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, HBH has no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands.

Once all the information about your insurance coverage is attained, your therapist will discuss what can be expected to be accomplished with the benefits that are available and what will happen if they run out before you feel ready to end treatment. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for services yourself to avoid the problems described above.

### Contacting Providers

Providers are often not immediately available by phone. While providers typically have office hours, they will often be with patients and unavailable to answer the phone. When unavailable, other staff or monitored voicemail will be available. Providers will make every effort to return calls on the same business day, or next business day, in the event of calls after hours, or on weekends or holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please leave a message with times you will be available. If you are unable to reach a provider and feel you cannot wait for a return call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. If a provider will be unavailable for an extended time, the provider will offer the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary. Please let your provider know if you prefer to communicate via electronic means and that will be discussed.

In the event your provider has an emergency and is unable to make contact with you, a colleague will reach out to you. This staff member will observe all confidentiality practices of the clinic.

### Professional Records

As you are likely aware, providers are required to keep records of the professional services rendered. Because these records contain information that can be misunderstood by someone who is not a behavioral health professional, patients are generally not permitted to review them directly; however, at your request, a treatment summary can be provided in many cases. If a summary is deemed as potentially demanding to you, a summary can be sent to another behavioral health professional who is working with you, with your completion of a release of information.

Please note that we are an environmentally friendly, largely paperless practice. Whoever you authorize to receive your information will need to have a secure way to received your documents. This limits processing time and fees to you.

### Confidentiality

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and behavioral health provider is protected by law, and information about our work can only be released to others with your written

permission. We take this very seriously and make every effort to protect your privacy. However, there are exceptions, outlined below.

In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent the release of information regarding your treatment. In some proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may order testimony. In the event a legitimate court order is received, your provider will need to respond.

There are some situations in which providers are legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if that requires revealing information about a patient's treatment. For example, if a provider believes a child or an adult who is vulnerable in some way has been or is being abused, the provider must file a report with the appropriate agency. This extends to prenatal exposure to substances of abuse.

If a provider believes a patient is a risk to themselves or others, the provider is required to take protective actions. These actions can include notifying a potential victim, contacting the police, seeking hospitalization of the patient, or contacting patient family members or others who can help provide protection.

In the event you disclose professional misconduct by another health care professional, your provider is required to make a report to the governing agency. If a professional meeting or legal hearing is held, relevant records may be released to substantiate the concerns.

These situations rarely occur and every effort will be made to fully discuss disclosures before taking action.

Parents or legal guardians of non-emancipated minors also have the right to access a patient's record when the patient is under age 18. In the event of a patient's death, the spouse, parent, or other legal guardian has the right to access the deceased patient's record.

Providers may occasionally find it helpful to consult with other professionals about a case. During a consultation, every effort will be made to protect identifying information. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential.

An additional measure we use to protect your privacy is limiting communication outside of the office. Providers and staff will not attend events at your invitation or acknowledge you in public, unless you do so first. Staff will not accept requests to connect on social media.

If you have any questions or concerns about any issues of confidentiality, please note and discuss them with your provider at your next session.