

## **OUTPATIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT AND CONSENT FOR TREATMENT**

Welcome to Visions Solutions Counseling Services. This document contains important information about professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so that you and your therapist can discuss them at your next meeting. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and your Therapist.

### **THERAPY SERVICES**

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the therapist and patient, and the particular problems brought forward. There are many different methods your therapist may use to deal with the problems you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your (and/or your child's) 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 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 Therapist will be able to offer you some first impressions of what your 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 your therapist. If you have questions about procedures, you should 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 mental health professional for a second opinion.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a therapist is protected by law, and your therapist can only release information about your work together to others with your written permission. But there are a few exceptions.

- In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent your therapist from providing any information about your treatment. In some proceedings involving child custody, those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, and in some other types of legal proceedings, a judge may order your therapist's testimony if he/she determines the issues demand it. In Georgia, your therapist must release your records if he/she is court ordered to do so.

- There are some situations in which the therapist is obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if he/she must reveal some information about a patient's treatment. For example, if the therapist believes that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused, he/she must file a report with the appropriate state agency.
- If the therapist believes a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, he/she is required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient. If the patient threatens to harm himself/herself, the therapist may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

These situations have rarely occurred in our practice. If a similar situation occurs, your therapist will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

Your therapist may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, every effort is made to avoid revealing the identity of a patient. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you do not object, your therapist will not tell you about these consultations unless he/she feels it is important to your work together.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that you and your therapist discuss any questions or concerns you may have at the next meeting. Your therapist will be happy to discuss these issues with you if you need specific advice, but formal legal advice may be needed because the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex, and your therapist is not an attorney.

## **INSURANCE**

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize your therapist to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. (Diagnoses are technical terms that describe the nature of your/your child's problems and whether they are short-term or long-term problems. All diagnoses come from a book entitled the DSM-V. There is a copy in the office and your therapist would be glad to let you see it to learn more about your /your child's diagnosis, if applicable.). Sometimes your therapist must provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or 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, your therapist has no control over what they do with it once it is in the insurance company's hands. In some cases, the insurance company may share the information with a national medical information databank. Your therapist will provide you with a copy of any report he/she submits, if you request it. By signing this Agreement, you agree that your therapist can provide requested information to your carrier if you plan to pay with insurance.

In addition, if you plan to use your insurance, authorization from the insurance company may be required before they will cover fees. If you did not obtain authorization and it is required, you may be responsible for full payment of the fee. Many policies leave a percentage of the fee (which is called co-insurance) or a flat dollar amount (referred to as a co-payment) to be covered by the patient. Either amount is to be paid at the time of the visit by check or cash. In addition, some insurance companies also have a deductible, which is an out-of-pocket amount that must be paid by the patient before the insurance company is willing to begin paying any amount for services. This will typically mean that you will be responsible to pay for initial sessions until your deductible has been met; the deductible amount may also need to be met at the start of each calendar year. Once we have all the information about your insurance coverage, we will discuss what we can reasonably expect to accomplish with the benefits that are available and what will happen if coverage ends before you feel ready to end your sessions. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for services yourself to avoid the problems described above, unless prohibited by the provider contract with the insurance company.

If your therapist is not a participating provider for your insurance plan, we will supply you with a receipt of payment for services, which you can submit to your insurance company for reimbursement. Please note that not all insurance companies reimburse for out-of-network providers. If you prefer to use a participating provider, we will make an attempt to refer you to a colleague.

### **MEETINGS**

At the onset of therapy, your therapist normally conducts an evaluation that lasts from 2 to 3 sessions. During this time, you and your therapist can both decide if your therapist is the best person to provide services to meet your treatment goals. Psychotherapy sessions usually last 45 minutes (the “appointment hour”). The frequency with which you meet with your therapist will be determined after the evaluation period. Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation [unless you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control]. Please refer to our Office Policies document for further details. If possible, your therapist will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment. We understand that things come up but progress in therapy is contingent upon consistency. Should you miss multiple appointments, you and your therapist will discuss whether continuation at this practice is appropriate.

### **CONTACTING YOUR THERAPIST**

Your Therapist is often not immediately available by telephone. While your therapist may be typically in the office between 9 AM and 5 PM, he/she probably will not answer the phone when with a client. When your therapist is unavailable, the telephone is answered by voice mail that he/she monitors frequently.

Your therapist will make every effort to return your call within 24 hours, except for weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform your therapist in your message of some times when you will be available. If you are unable to reach your therapist and feel you cannot wait for your therapist to return your call, contact your family physician, psychiatrist, or go to the nearest emergency room.



**PROFESSIONAL RECORDS**

The laws and standards of this profession require that your therapist keep treatment records.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document, agree to abide by its terms during your professional relationship with your therapist, and consent to treatment/evaluation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Patient

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian/Personal Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Visions Solutions Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date