

PTR

PSYCHOLOGICAL/THERAPEUTIC RESOURCES, LLC

P O. Box 777, New Bern, NC 28563
504 Pollock Street (252) 638-3881
210 Stonebridge Square, Havelock, NC (252) 447-4151

Outpatient Services Contract

This document is meant to explain our practice policies. It is important to us that you are informed about your rights, responsibilities, and what to expect from therapy. Please read it carefully and note any questions you may have so we can discuss them at our next meeting. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES: Psychotherapy (sometimes called “counseling”) is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient (sometimes called “client”) and the particular problems brought to therapy. Therefore, there are many different treatment approaches we may use to help you deal with the issues you want to address.

Psychotherapy is not something “done to you.” It is a very active process, like learning to play a musical instrument or “getting into shape.” In order for therapy to be successful it is essential that you be willing to work on the issues we discuss, and the harder you work in therapy the more likely you will be to reach your treatment goals. However, you always have the right to refuse treatment or treatment recommendations.

Psychotherapy is also a process that is sometimes challenging. It often involves discussing difficult subjects. However, it has been proven to benefit the vast majority of people who participate in it. We are dedicated to helping you grow, change, and solve problems and while therapy can be hard work, most people find that the effort they put into it is rewarded in terms of building happier, more fulfilled lives.

Our initial sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. After this evaluation, we will be able to offer you some suggestions of what our work will include and a tentative treatment plan should you decide to continue. You should evaluate this information along with your feelings about working with your clinician. Therapy is a considerable commitment, so you should find the right therapist. If you have questions about your treatment you should discuss them as soon as they arise. If your doubts persist, we will assist you in finding another professional for a second opinion.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your privacy is of utmost importance to us. We follow all HIPAA regulations. Therefore, all communications between a patient and psychologist are protected by law and professional ethics. However, there are exceptions:

If we suspect that you plan to harm yourself or someone else or if you say something that raises any possibility that you are abusing a child, spouse, or elderly person we are obligated to report it.

If you are involved in a legal action, judges are authorized to order psychologists to reveal confidential information if the judge considers it to be in “the proper administration of justice.”

If you are under the age of 18, we are required to tell a parent or legal guardian if we suspect you are in danger of harming yourself or others. Harmful activities are not restricted to violent acts and may also include excessive substance abuse, criminal behavior, and unprotected and/or promiscuous sexual activity. (Minors and their parent or guardian may be asked to complete an additional informed consent form outlining the limits of confidentiality specific to their situation.)

If we are named in a lawsuit that you have initiated, **all** treatment records will become open in court. Our practice does not conduct forensic evaluations (information for the courts to assist in legal decisions, such as child custody). Our treatment services are limited to diagnostic evaluations (to assist in treatment) and psychotherapy.

Recent changes in our government, i.e., the PATRIOT Act, may also require us to disclose your treatment information to authorized federal officials who are conducting national security and intelligence activities or providing protective services to the President or other important officials. In accordance with this Act, we cannot reveal to you when we have disclosed such information to the government.

New appointments will not be scheduled if your bill is not paid in a timely fashion. If your account remains delinquent it will be turned over to a collection agency. They will then receive information relevant to your case (e.g., name, address, phone number(s), place of employment, dates of service, balance due, insurance information including diagnosis, and emergency contacts).

We may occasionally find it necessary to consult with colleagues about a case. During these consultations we will not reveal your identity. The consultant is also legally bound to keep information confidential. Unless you request it, we will not tell you about any consultations unless it is important to our work together. If the patient is a minor in a residential treatment center, group home, or foster care, we are expected to share information about his/her treatment and current status with the treatment team. In general, we will remain sensitive to privacy issues and attempt to balance these with the needs of the treatment team to know about the case. If you specifically ask, we will discuss with you the information that is to be disclosed.

TREATMENT SESSIONS: Most sessions last 45-50 minutes. Evaluations require more time and can last 2 to 5 hours. Your appointment times are reserved just for you, so it is important to be on time to make full use of the session. Telephone consultations will be billed at \$120.00/hour (prorated). There will be no charge for brief phone calls (e.g., short questions, re-scheduling appointments, etc.). If you miss your scheduled therapy appointment, and you have not notified us at least 24 hours in advance **you will be required to pay the full cost** of the session unless otherwise arranged with our practice. Future appointments are normally not made or kept until these fees are paid. We normally **do not** provide appointment reminders. Clinicians reserve the right to terminate therapeutic relationships after multiple cancellations or failures to appear for appointments. If you are faced with an emergency, after hours coverage is provided but do not hesitate to call the Emergency Room or 911 in a serious (life or death) situation.

PAYMENT: We will obtain insurance information at the first visit and will file insurance as a courtesy to you; *however, each patient is ultimately responsible for charges incurred in the event insurance does not pay.* It is rare for an insurance plan to pay 100% of charges for outpatient health services. Therefore, the patient is expected to pay his or her deductible (if not already paid for the year) and co-payment (the percentage of charges the insurance company will not pay). **These payments are due at the time of each visit.** There will be a **\$20.00 charge for returned checks** and a late payment penalty on balances 60 days past due.

INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT: Due to rising health care costs, insurance benefits have become more complex. You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage that describes mental health services. If you have questions about coverage, call your plan administrator. We will do our best, based on our experience, to help you understand your benefits, but it is sometimes difficult, even for us, to understand some insurance issues.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize us to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes we have to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans and summaries. In rare cases some companies even require copies of entire records. This information becomes part of your insurance company file. Though insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, we have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands.

Once we have all your insurance information we can discuss what we can expect to accomplish with the benefits available. We can also discuss what might happen if your benefits end before you feel ready to end your treatment. You need to know that you have the right to pay for our services yourself if you are uncomfortable with your insurer's policies (unless the self-pay option is expressly prohibited).

RECORDS: The laws and standards of our profession require that we keep treatment records. These records often consist of notes from therapy sessions plus insurance documents and claim forms. These records belong to PTR, and because they are sometimes comprised of shorthand notations and are only partial recordings from sessions, they can be misinterpreted and misunderstood. For these reasons we do not normally release session notes. However, you are entitled to a record of your treatment, therefore, we can prepare a treatment summary for you instead. If you request such a summary we recommend you review them in our presence so we can discuss the contents. Patients will be charged a standard hourly fee for information requests.

CONTACTING US: Our normal office hours are 9:00am to 4:30pm Monday – Thursday and 9:00am to 12:00pm on Friday. Clinicians cannot answer the telephone while serving patients; however, our office manager will generally be available to assist you. In other cases you may speak with our answering service or get an answering machine. We will make every effort to return your call promptly but there are exceptions, such as weekends, holidays, and when we are out of town. If you are unable to contact us and feel you are in need of immediate assistance contact your family physician or the emergency room and ask for the mental health professional on call.

LETTERS AND CONSULTATIONS: It is sometimes necessary to write letters for our patients. If done as part of professional courtesy or our recommended treatment there will be no

charge for this service. However, if we are required to write a letter for a legal matter or at patient request the time required to produce these documents will be billed at our standard hourly rate.

Similarly, consulting with other professionals by telephone or in person and reviewing records (if not required as part of your treatment in our office) will be billed on a prorated basis. All forms of legal testimony or other forensic services are billed at a rate of \$250.00/hour.

THE PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP: Although our sessions may be very intimate psychologically, it is important to recognize that we have a professional relationship rather than a social one. Our contacts will be limited to the sessions that we arrange. Please do not invite your therapist to social gatherings, offer him or her gifts, or ask them to relate to you in any way other than as your clinician. You will be best served if the relationship with your therapist remains strictly professional. You may learn a great deal about your therapist as you work together in therapy. However, it is important to remember that you are experiencing them in a professional role.

FOR PATIENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Disability Rights North Carolina is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Raleigh. Its team of attorneys, advocates, paralegals and support staff provide advocacy and legal services at no charge for people with disabilities across North Carolina. As the state’s federally mandated protection and advocacy system, Disability Rights North Carolina is charged with protecting the rights of children and adults with disabilities living in North Carolina.

For assistance, contact Disability Rights NC:

Toll-Free: 877-235-4210

Email: info@disabilityrightsn.org

Office and Mailing Address:

3724 National Drive, Suite 100
Raleigh, NC 2761

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

Date _____
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Signed _____