



OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT

Welcome to Diversified Counseling Services (DCS). Since this is your first visit, or continuing visit, we hope what is written here can answer some of your questions as you seek therapy. Please let us know if you want clarification on any of the topics discussed in this Outpatient Services Contract, or if you have any questions that are not addressed here. When you sign this document, you are stating that you understand and will adhere to the information in this Outpatient Services Contract.

PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES

We provide psychotherapy services for children, adolescents, adults, couples and families. The first appointment(s) serves as a consultation. We will want to hear about the difficulties that led to you making an appointment, goals for therapy, and general information about yourself and your current life situation. By the end of this first appointment, we will give you some initial recommendations on what we think will help. If we do not think we are able to best assist you, we will give you names of other professionals who we believe would work well with your particular issues. If you do not agree with our treatment recommendations or do not think our personality styles will be a good match for you, let us know and we will do our best to suggest a different therapist who may be a better fit.

If you and your therapist decide to work together in therapy, you will collaborate on a treatment plan that incorporates effective strategies to help with whatever difficulties you are hoping to reduce in therapy. Sometimes more than one approach is helpful. Individual, couples and family therapy sessions last 45-60 minutes (depending on your insurance benefits) unless otherwise arranged. Oftentimes, sessions are set for once each week, but this varies based on what seems most appropriate for your particular situation.

Therapy can be extremely helpful and fulfilling, and it takes work both in and out of sessions to be most effective. It requires active involvement, honesty, and openness in order to change thoughts, emotional reactions and/or behaviors. There are benefits and risks to therapy. Potential benefits include increased healthy habits, improved communication and stability in relationships, and lessening of distress. Some potential risks include increased uncomfortable emotions as you self-explore, and changes in dynamics or communication with significant people in your life. Sometimes couples that come for therapy choose to end their relationships. Although there are many benefits to therapy, there is no guarantee of positive or intended results.

If during your work together with your therapist, noncompliance with treatment recommendations becomes an issue, we will make effort to discuss this with you to determine the barriers to treatment compliance. At times, treatment noncompliance may necessitate termination of therapy service. We encourage you to discuss any concerns you have about our



work together directly so that we can address it in a timely manner. **Other factors that may result in termination of therapy include, but are not limited to, violence or threats toward us, or refusal to pay for services after a reasonable time and attempts to resolve the issue.**

Deciding when therapy is complete is meant to be a mutual decision, and we will discuss how to know when therapy is nearing completion. Sometimes people begin to schedule less frequently to gradually end therapy. Others feel ready to end therapy without a phasing out period of time.

We may at times seek consultation with other therapists to ensure we are helping you in the most effective manner. We will give information only to the extent necessary, and we make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my clients. The consultant is also under a legal and ethical duty to keep the information confidential.

AVAILABILITY BETWEEN SESSIONS

If needed, you can leave your therapist a message on our 24-hour voicemail box at 301-856-3636. When you leave a message, include your telephone number even if you think we already have it, and best times to reach you. We make every effort to return calls in a timely manner. In the rare occurrence that a message is missed or accidentally deleted, if you do not hear back from us within one day, please leave a second message. If we are unavailable for an extended time, such as on vacation, we will inform you of the contact information for the therapist on-call during our absence.

If you are in an emergency situation and cannot wait for us to return your call, go to the nearest emergency room or call 911. Diversified Counseling Services is not a crisis facility. Do not contact us by email or fax in an emergency, as we may not get the information quickly.

RATES AND INSURANCE

Therapy is a commitment of time, energy and financial resources. If you have health insurance, it is important for you to verify your mental health benefits so you understand your coverage prior to your appointment. Some insurance companies require a precertification before the first appointment or they will not cover the cost of services.

We are happy to assist you by having our Office Manager file claims to your insurance company on your behalf. However, you, not your insurance company, are responsible for payment of the fee for therapy. Acceptable forms of payment include cash, check and major credit cards, and payment is expected at the time of service. Cancellations or missed appointments without 24 hours notice will be subject to full fee charge, and insurance companies do not pay charges for missed appointments. If fees for services are not paid in a reasonable amount of time, and attempts have been made to resolve the financial matter to no avail, a client account may be sent to a collection service.

Most insurance agreements require you to authorize us to provide a clinical diagnosis and sometimes additional clinical information. If you request it, we will provide you with information to send to your insurance company. This information will become part of the insurance company's files. Insurance



companies claim to keep information confidential, but you should check with your insurance company directly if you have questions about their confidentiality practices.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

In order to maintain your confidentiality and our respective privacy, we do not interact with current or former clients on social networking websites. We do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking sites including; Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. We will not respond to friend requests or messages through these sites.

We will not solicit testimonials, ratings or grades from clients on websites or through any means. We will not respond to testimonials, ratings or grades on websites, whether positive or negative, in order to maintain your confidentiality. Our hope is that you will bring concerns about our work together to the therapy session so we can address concerns directly.

Please do not contact us through text messages or emails regarding clinical issues. These are not a secure communications, and there is possibility that we will not get the message in a timely manner, or that communication will be interpreted in an unclear manner. If you need to contact your therapist between sessions, please call 301-856-3636. Text messages and emails are only to be used for scheduling, changing or canceling appointments.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

Both law and the standards of our profession require that we keep appropriate treatment records. If we receive a request for information about you, you must authorize in writing that you agree that the requested information released.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, law protects the confidentiality of all communications between a client and a mental health clinician, and we can only release information to others with your written permission. However, there are a number of exceptions, which are have indicated below. More information is provided about this in your HIPAA statement.

In judicial proceedings, if a judge orders the records released, we have to release the records. In addition, we are ethically and legally required to take action to protect others from harm even if taking this action means we reveal information about you. For example, if we believe a child, elderly person or disabled person is being abused or neglected, we are mandated to report this to the appropriate state agency. If we believe a client is threatening serious harm to another person or property, we must take protective action (through notifying the potential victim, the police, and/or facilitating hospitalization of my client). If we believe a client is a serious threat to harming him/ herself, we must take protective action (arranging hospitalization, contacting family/ significant others for notification, and/ or contacting the police).



We would make reasonable effort to discuss any need to disclose confidential information about you, and we are happy to answer any questions you have about the exceptions to confidentiality.

MINORS

If you are under 12 years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents the right to examine your treatment records. If you are between the ages of 12 and 18, the law may provide your parents the right to examine your treatment records if after being informed of your parents' request to examine your records, you do not object or your therapist does not find that there are compelling reasons for denying the access to the records. Notwithstanding the above, your parents are always entitled to the following information: current physical and mental condition, diagnosis, treatment needs, services provided, and services needed. Before giving them any information, your therapist will discuss the matter with you, if possible, and do their best to handle any objections you may have with what is prepared to discuss.

COURT RELATED SERVICES

We do not provide or perform evaluations for custody, visitation or other forensic matters. Therefore, it is understood and agreed that we cannot and will not provide any testimony or reports regarding issues of custody, visitation or fitness of a parent in any legal matters or administrative proceedings.

If we are contacted by an attorney regarding your treatment (either at your behest or related to a legal matter you are involved in) please note the following:

*We charge \$150 per hour to prepare for and/or attend any legal proceeding and for all court related services.

*Charges for court related services are not covered by insurance.

*Court related services include: talking with attorneys, preparing documents, traveling to court, depositions and court appearances.

*If the court or attorneys do not pay our fee, you will be charged for the time we spend responding to legal matters

*You will also be charged for any costs we incur responding to attorneys in your case, including but not limited to fees we are charged for legal consultation and representation by our attorneys.



COMPLAINTS

If you have a concern or complaint about your treatment or about your billing statement, please talk to us about it. We will take your criticism seriously, openly, and respond respectfully.

QUESTIONS

If during the course of your therapy, you have any questions about the nature of your therapy or about your billing statement, please ask.

A FINAL WORD

The counseling relationship is a very personal and individualized partnership. We want to know what you find helpful and what, if anything, may be getting in the way. We want you to feel free to share with us what we can do to help.

Please ask before signing below if you have any questions about psychotherapy or our office policies. Your signature indicates that you have read our Outpatient Services Contract and agree to enter therapy under these conditions. Your signature below indicates that you are making an informed choice to consent to therapy and understand and accept the terms of this agreement.