

Psychological Services of Alaska

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OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT

Welcome to my clinical practice. Please read this document carefully; it contains important information about both your and my rights and responsibilities. If you have any questions, I'm happy to discuss them with you. When you sign this document, it becomes an agreement between the both of us.

Psychological Services

Because people enter therapy for a number of reasons, with a varying number of people (individually, with a partner, or with a family), and with a variety of goals, the therapeutic process can look very different from client to client. Successful therapy requires active participation on the part of both the client and the therapist.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since it often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings. Research indicates that psychotherapy is an effective treatment for many people, but there are no guarantees that it will be helpful for any given person.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation and clarification of your goals. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions about what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow, if you decide to engage in therapy with me. You should evaluate this information along with your assessment of whether we're a good therapeutic fit. Research indicates that this fit is the most important indicator of a good prognosis in therapy, so if it doesn't feel right, please trust your intuition. I won't take it personally if you decide to seek treatment elsewhere, and will help you find other reputable therapists if you'd like. If at any time you have questions or concerns about any aspect of the treatment, it's important that you bring them up with me so we can discuss them.

Couples Therapy

In couples therapy, one person is the “identified patient” for the purposes of record keeping and billing. The “identified patient” is the person who is responsible financially, and also has legal rights to the clinical record.

Meetings

As previously stated our first task will be to get to know each other a bit, clarify your goals, and perform an assessment. During this time we can both decide if I am the best person to provide the therapy you’re looking for. If we both decide we’re a good match to work together in therapy, we’ll need to make some decisions about the frequency and timing of our sessions. Therapy usually takes place once per week, but there are many good reasons to deviate from this schedule. Most clients don’t have difficulties finding open times for sessions, but if you have very specific times you need appointments, they may not always be available.

You can view my availability on line at www.therapyappointment.com; choose “find your therapist” at the top right, then enter my information. On the next screen, select the option at the bottom about checking my availability. This will take you to a calendar showing all my open appointments. You can’t make an appointment directly from this link, but you can match your calendar to mine and tell me what appointment you’d like; I’ll respond with a confirmation.

Confidentiality

Privacy of information discussed in therapy is a central component of treatment. In general, what’s discussed in the context of therapy is strictly confidential. There are exceptions, however, that you need to be aware of:

- If I believe that a client is seriously in danger of hurting himself/herself or someone else, I am legally required to break confidentiality to maintain safety. This may involve contacting the potential victim.
- If I believe someone who can’t protect themselves (a child, elder, disabled person) has been hurt, I am legally required to break confidentiality.
- I often staff cases with other mental health professionals in an effort to provide a high quality of service. I also occasionally refer to my time with clients when involved in teaching activities with other therapists or therapists in training. When I share information with other professionals in this manner, I make every effort to change all information which might be used to identify the client.
- Some clients ask me to share information with a third party. This most often occurs when I coordinate with an insurance company or another professional.

- There are other rare exceptions to confidentiality; if you're concerned about this issue, please bring it up with me.

Fees

My normal rate is \$185.00 per 45 minute session for individual or couples therapy (90834). Because of the extra time and expense involved in creating patient accounts and charts, the first appointment (90791) is \$225.00. Please inquire about fees for shorter or longer sessions, as well as document preparation fees. Because of the specialized training and cost of materials involved, my fee for psychological evaluation is \$200.00 per hour. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge \$300.00 per hour for preparation and involvement at any legal proceeding.

I ask that if you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment, you do so two working days in advance; this lets me and others make use of the time. Please know that I do charge the full amount of the session for appointments canceled or not attended, with less than 24 hours notice (a business day.) This commitment goes both ways; if I fail to keep an appointment I've made with less than a business day's notice I will reimburse you the price of the session. These "no-show" fees are meant to be applied to situations involving forgetfulness or prioritizing other activities (including work) over therapy, not last minute illness or unsafe driving situations.

Billing and Payments

Full payment is expected at the time of service unless other arrangements have been made. Most clients choose to keep a credit card on file to make recurring payments; this is an option but not a requirement. You may also pay with a check or cash.

If your account has not been paid for over 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, I have the option of using legal means to secure payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If such legal action is required, such costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information I release regarding a client's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, the amount due, and history of nonpayment.

Insurance Reimbursement

I'm happy to provide a "superbill", a receipt containing the information necessary for a client to file a claim with their insurance carrier, but I don't bill insurance. Unfortunately the resources of time and expense required of a single practitioner to engage in insurance billing and tracking makes this service impractical. Clients are encouraged to call the number on the back of

their card to inquire about benefits and whether preauthorization is required under their plan. To make this inquiry efficient, you may consider asking about “mental health benefits including service code 90834”, which is the code used for psychotherapy. I’m happy to fill out preauthorization paperwork required by the insurance company for payment, but it is the clients’ responsibility to track these requirements and present the paperwork to the therapist.

Contacting Me

Since I spend much of the day in sessions with clients, I am not often available immediately. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered either by our receptionist or a voicemail. If I am in the office, I attempt to return phone calls the day they are left though this is not always possible. Please know that I don’t return phone calls during days that I am not in the office. If you are not able to reach me and you feel that you can’t wait for me to return your call, please reach out to one or more of the following:

Your general practitioner

The crisis help line (563-3200)

The nearest hospital emergency room [Providence is (907) 212-3111;

Regional is (907) 264-1224]

Professional Records

I will keep records which document our time together. Clients are entitled to know the information in these records if they wish. However, because my notes are written in my own shorthand and for the purposes of clinical documentation, they are often either not understood or misunderstood when read by clients, attorneys, or other people without clinical expertise. For this reason, I suggest that I write a treatment summary for those people wishing to receive documentation of their treatment with me.

Minors

If you are under the age of 18, you need to know that the law may provide your parents with the right to access your clinical records. It’s my policy to have the boundaries of privacy agreed upon by parents and teens prior to beginning treatment with a minor, but these agreements may not be legally binding. Please address all of your concerns about your parent/guardian’s access to clinical information before engaging in treatment.

I understand and have been given a copy of the above material.

Client's name

Client's signature

Date

Name of client's parent/guardian
(if under 18)

Signature of client's parent/guardian
(if under 18)

Date