

Serenity Place, LLC
22530 Washington Street, #1
P.O. Box 1831
Leonardtown, MD 20650
P: 301-690-8008 F: 312-260-7996

PSYCHOTHERAPIST-CLIENT SERVICE AGREEMENT

Welcome to Serenity Place! This document contains important information about our professional services and business policies. It also contains summary information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (“HIPAA”), a federal law that provides privacy protections and patient rights about the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (“PHI”) for the purposes of treatment, payment, and health care operations. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you understand them. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. We can discuss any questions you have when you sign them or at any time in the future.

PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness, because the process of psychotherapy often requires discussing the unpleasant aspects of your life. However, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for individuals who undertake it. Therapy often leads to a significant reduction in feelings of distress, increased satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, greater personal awareness and insight, increased skills for managing stress and resolutions to specific problems. But, there are no guarantees about what will happen. Psychotherapy requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work on things we discuss outside of sessions.

The first 2-3 sessions will involve a comprehensive evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, we will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what our work might include. At that point, we will discuss your treatment goals and create an initial treatment plan. You should evaluate this information and make your own assessment about whether you feel comfortable working with us. If you have questions about our procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, we will be happy to give you suggestions for another mental health professional for a second opinion.

APPOINTMENTS

Appointments will ordinarily be 45-50 minutes in duration, once per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be more or less frequent as needed. The time scheduled for your appointment is assigned to you and you alone. **If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, we ask that you provide us with 24 hours’ notice. If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel with less than 24-hour notice, our policy is to collect \$50.00 (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control). It is important to note that insurance companies do not provide reimbursement for cancelled sessions; thus, you will be responsible for the portion of the fee as described above.** If it is possible, we will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment. In addition, you are responsible for coming to your session on time; if you are late, your appointment will still need to end on time.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

The standard fee for the initial diagnostic evaluation is \$150.00 and each subsequent session is \$125.00. We charge this amount for other professional services you may need though We will break down the hourly cost if we work for less than the 50 minute duration. Other services include writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than **15** minutes, school observations, preparation of records or treatment summaries or time spent performing any other service you request. You are responsible for paying at the time of your session unless prior arrangements have been made. We accept cash, check, all credit cards, debit cards as well as Flexible Spending Account cards. Any checks returned to our office are subject to an additional fee of up to \$35.00 to cover the bank fee that we incur. If you refuse to pay your debt, we reserve the right to use an attorney or collection agency to secure payment. In the instance of unusual financial hardship for you or your family, we may be willing to offer a fee adjustment depending on family income and additional circumstances.

If you anticipate becoming involved in a court case, we recommend that we discuss this fully before you waive your right to confidentiality. If your case requires our participation, you will be expected to pay for the professional time required even if another party compels us to testify.

INSURANCE

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 a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. With your permission, we will assist you to the extent possible in filing claims and ascertaining information about your coverage, but you are responsible for knowing your coverage and for letting us know if/when your coverage changes.

Due to the rising costs of health care, insurance benefits have increasingly become more complex. It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how much mental health coverage is available. Managed Health Care plans such as HMOs and PPOs often require advance authorization, without which they may refuse to provide reimbursement for mental health services. These plans are often limited to short-term treatment approaches designed to work out specific problems that interfere with a person's usual level of functioning. It may be necessary to seek approval for more therapy after a certain number of sessions. While a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, some patients feel that they need more services after insurance benefits end. Some managed-care plans will not allow us to provide services to you once your benefits end. If this is the case, we will try to provide you with 3 providers as alternatives, to help you continue your psychotherapy.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize us to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. (Diagnoses are technical terms that describe the nature of your 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 our office and we will be glad to let you see it to learn more about your diagnosis, if applicable.). Sometimes we have to 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, we have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. In some cases, they may share the information with a national medical information databank. We will provide you with a copy of any report we submit, if you request it. By signing this Agreement, you agree that we 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 therapy 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, credit card 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 companies are willing to begin paying any amount for services. This will typically mean that you will be responsible to pay for initial sessions with us 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 of 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 our services yourself to avoid the problems described above, unless prohibited by our provider contract.

If we are 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, you can refer to your insurance plan for providers in network or alternatively we can suggest other providers in the area – though cannot guarantee their availability or ability to accept your insurance..

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

We are required to keep appropriate records of the psychological services that we provide. Your records are maintained in a HIPAA compliant practice management system online. We keep brief records noting that you were here, your reasons for seeking therapy, the goals and progress we set for treatment, your diagnosis, topics we discussed, your medical, social, and treatment history, records we receive from other providers, copies of records we send to others, and your billing records. Except in unusual circumstances that involve danger to yourself, you have the right to a copy of your file. Because these are professional records, they may be misinterpreted and / or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, we recommend that you initially review them with us, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional to discuss the contents. If we refuse your request for access to your records, you have a right to have our decision reviewed by another mental health professional which we will discuss with you upon your request. You also have the right to request that a copy of your file be made available to any other health care provider at your written request.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Our policies about confidentiality, as well as other information about your privacy rights, are fully described in a separate document entitled Notice of Privacy Practices. You have been provided with a copy of that document and we have discussed those issues. Please remember that you may reopen the conversation at any time during our work together.

PARENTS OF MINORS

Minors under 16 years of age who are not emancipated and their parents should be aware that the law may allow parents to examine their child's treatment records. While privacy in psychotherapy is very important, particularly with teenagers, parental involvement is also essential to successful treatment. Therefore, it is usually our policy to request an agreement from any patient between 16 and 18 and his/her parents allowing us to share general information about the progress of treatment and their child's attendance at scheduled sessions. If requested, we will also provide parents with a summary of their child's treatment when it is complete. Any other communication will require the child's authorization, unless we feel that the child is in danger or is a danger to someone else, in which case, we will notify the parents of our concern. Before giving parents information we will discuss the matter with the child, if possible, and do our best to handle any objections he/she may have. We meet with parents and child together periodically or as needed to encourage an open review of progress and any concerns which might need to be addressed.

CONTACTING US

Our clinicians are often not immediately available by telephone. Therapists are unable to answer the phone when we are with clients or otherwise unavailable. At these times, you may leave a message on our confidential voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible, but it may take one to two business days for non-urgent matters. If, for any number of unseen reasons, you do not hear from us or we are unable to reach you, and you feel you cannot wait for a return call or if you feel unable to keep yourself safe, 1) Go to your nearest Emergency Room or 2) Call 911 or 988 for immediate help. We will make every attempt to inform you in advance of planned absences, and provide you with the name and phone number of the mental health professional covering our practice.

OTHER RIGHTS

If you are unhappy with what is happening in therapy, we encourage you to talk with us so that we can respond to your concerns. Such comments will be taken seriously and handled with care and respect. You may also request that we refer you to another therapist and are free to end therapy at any time. You have the right to considerate, safe and respectful care, without discrimination as to race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, or source of payment. You have the right to ask questions about any aspects of therapy and about our specific training and experience. You have the right to expect that we will not have social or sexual relationships with clients or with former clients.