
INFORMED CONSENT FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Psychological Evaluation

A psychological evaluation is an assessment done to help others understand your mental health. There are many reasons people request evaluations, such as making informed decisions about treatment or surgery, helping to inform a determination of disability, answering specific questions about behavioral functioning, etc. The evaluation is done by the psychologist collecting behavioral samples through observation, interview questions, and the administration of standardized tests. Additionally, the examiner may review records that may be informative or interview others about your history and, if available, will incorporate that information in the conclusions. At the end of the evaluation, the examiner will write a report including a description of your background information and the clinical interview, the test findings, the conclusions, and any recommendations.

Risks and Benefits

Participating in a psychological evaluation involves risks and benefits. The clinical interview will touch on personal and private matters that could cause emotional discomfort and revive painful memories. Likewise, the testing may cause you to feel nervous, frustrated, or angry, and you may experience things like headache or fatigue. There are no guarantees as to what you will experience. Your psychologist has no intention of causing any personal discomfort but is simply carrying out the professional tasks associated with the evaluation. You are encouraged to discuss any discomfort with your psychologist.

However, the evaluation report will describe your functioning and any mental or emotional conditions you may have, and this information can help the people requesting the evaluation understand you better, make decisions with you, and provide you with more individualized care that may meet your needs better. It may also help you understand yourself better, and that is often a positive experience for people.

Clinical vs. Forensic Evaluations

If your psychological evaluation is connected to any outstanding legal issues, it may be either a clinical evaluation or a forensic evaluation. There are significant differences between these two types of evaluations that you should be aware of.

With a clinical evaluation, you hire a psychologist to perform the evaluation. Although the court may use the evaluation, it is not conducted to make "psycho-legal" determinations, such as competency to stand trial, parental capacity, child custody determinations, etc. Your psychologist will have no forensic opinion as a result of a clinical evaluation.

With a forensic evaluation, the attorney or court hires the psychologist to provide an expert forensic opinion, based on the very specific information collected during the specialized evaluation. You are encouraged to ask any questions you may have before making a decision about participating in a forensic evaluation.

Evaluation is not Advocacy

The psychologist-patient relationship is generally a helping one. Your psychologist will conduct the evaluation and make subsequent decisions with your best interest in mind. However, your psychologist's role is that of examiner or evaluator, not advocate, and each evaluation is conducted only to answer the referral question(s). Your psychologist will not form or communicate opinions outside the scope of the referral question(s).

Evaluation is not Treatment

Agreeing to participate in the evaluation process is not the same thing as agreeing to psychological treatment. Depending on your circumstances and the conclusions made at the end of this evaluation, your psychologist may recommend treatment. Your psychologist may or may not be available to provide the recommended treatment, depending on the nature of your evaluation, the nature of treatment needed, and availability. You are encouraged to ask any questions you may have about this.

Cooperation

Your cooperation with the evaluation process will directly affect the helpfulness of the report. You will be expected to answer all interview and test questions honestly, give your best effort, and make your psychologist aware of any issues that may affect your ability to be honest or give your best effort. Any lack of cooperation will be noted in the report.

If you are the parent/guardian of a child receiving services, you must remain in the building while your minor child is receiving services and be present at the time of completion of services to provide transportation, unless other arrangements are agreed upon.

Professional Fees

The fee for a psychological evaluation is \$150 per hour. In addition to face-to-face assessment appointments, evaluations involve time spent reviewing records, making collateral contacts, scoring and interpreting psychological tests, writing and distributing the report, and conducting a feedback session with you to review the report and answer any questions you may have. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require your psychologist's participation, you will be expected to pay for your psychologist's professional time even if he/she is called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, the charge is \$300 per hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceedings.

Billing and Payment

You will receive an itemized statement at the end of the evaluation and payment in full is required within 10 days of receipt, unless an alternative agreement is arranged or unless you have insurance coverage which requires another arrangement. Except in the case of emergency treatment, professional records may be withheld from release to third parties until payment in full has been received.

If you have health insurance, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health services. Know that your insurance policy is a contract between you and your insurance company. We are not a party to that contract. If you so choose, Abintra Psychological Associates will bill your insurance provider and provide you with reasonable assistance to receive the benefits to which you are entitled. However, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of fees, regardless of any insurance company's arbitrary determination of usual and customary rates for services. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers.

If payment from your insurance company is not received within 90 days, you will be expected to pay the full fee. After 90 days, there will be a finance charge of 1.5% per month charged to your account. Delinquent accounts may be turned over to a professional collection agency or attorney for appropriate action. You will assume responsibility for all collection charges incurred, including legal fees. If attorneys file a court action, you waive your right to appear in court and contest the verified balance of fees and interest. Further, you confess judgment against you in the amount of the verified balance, together with costs of collection, court costs, attorney's fees, and interest.

Insurance companies often require pre-authorization before they provide reimbursement for mental health services, and most insurance companies require you to authorize us to provide them with information about you, such as a clinical diagnosis or the entire record. This information will become part of the insurance company files and will probably be stored on 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.

Except for certain evaluations, it is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for psychological services yourself to avoid the problems described above.

Availability and Contact

Abintra psychologists are not immediately available by telephone, and a 24-hour answering service is not available. While we are usually in the office during the day, we will not answer the phone when we are with patients. Feel free to call the office and leave a voicemail message, and we will make our best effort to return calls in a timely manner. If you experience a crisis during the evaluation process and are unable to reach your psychologist, contact your physician, call 911, or report to the emergency room of your choice.

Confidentiality

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist is protected by law, and information about you can only be released with your expressed permission. But, there are some exceptions.

First, there are some situations in which we are legally obligated to take action to protect people from harm, even if a patient’s information needs to be revealed. For example, suspicions of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or dependent adults must be reported to the appropriate state agency. Threats of harm to other people must be taken seriously, and we are required to warn the potential victim and notify the police. Threats or risk of self-harm must be taken seriously, and we may seek hospitalization for the patient or may contact family members or others to provide protection during such emergencies.

Second, if your treatment is, or will be, connected with legal issues, a judge may require us to release information or records about you or to provide written or oral testimony in the case. Such information may become part of the public record, and that determination is outside our control.

Third, as noted above, most insurance companies require you to authorize your psychologist to provide them with information about you, such as your diagnosis. Such information will become part of the insurance company’s files, and we will have no control over what they do with that information.

Fourth, if you choose to email your psychologist, those electronic communications will become part of the clinical record. No guarantee is made regarding the privacy of electronic communications.

While this summary of exceptions to confidentiality should be helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important for you to discuss with your psychologist any questions or concerns you may have. Psychologists are not attorneys and cannot provide you with formal legal advice. The laws governing confidentiality are quite complex, and you are encouraged to consult your attorney if needed.

Finally, just as your rights and privacy will be respected, you will be expected to respect the privacy and rights of other patients receiving services here by not disclosing who you see or what you hear to anyone outside this agency, either during or after your treatment.

Professional Records

The laws and standards of the psychological profession require us to keep records of the professional services provided to you. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. Additionally, copyright laws and ethical requirements to maintain test security impact the release of raw testing protocols. Therefore, if you wish to see your records, it is recommended that we review them together so that we can discuss their contents. Patients will be charged the appropriate fee for any professional time spent in responding to information requests.

Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have read the information in this document and have been given an opportunity to ask any and all questions. I further acknowledge that, even though I may have been referred for services, I am voluntarily seeking psychological evaluation and agree to abide by the terms of this document.

Signature of Patient

Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian (if patient is a minor)

Date