

Center for Psychological Health and Wellness, LLC

Information for Clients

This document is yours to keep. Please read all of it. Mark any parts that are not clear to you.

Welcome to our practice. We appreciate your giving us the opportunity to be of help to you. This document answers questions that clients often ask about therapy. WE believe our work will be most helpful to you when you have a clear idea of what we are trying to do.

THERAPY SERVICES

Therapy is not easily described in general statements. The service varies depending on the personalities of the therapist and client, and the particular problems brought forward. There are many different methods Center for Psychological Health and Wellness, LLC (CPHW) may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. It calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during sessions and at home.

Therapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other negative feelings. While you consider these risks, you should know also that the benefits of therapy have been shown by scientists in hundreds of well-designed research studies. People who are depressed may find their mood lifting. Others may no longer feel afraid, angry, or anxious. In therapy, people have a chance to talk things out fully until their feelings are relieved or the problems are solved. Clients' relationships and coping skills may improve greatly. They may get more satisfaction out of social and family relationships. Their personal goals and values may become clearer. They may grow in many directions—as persons, in their close relationships, in their work or schooling, and in the ability to enjoy their lives. We do not take on clients we do not think we can help. Therefore, we will enter our relationship with optimism about our progress.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, we will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan, if you decide to continue with services. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with us. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about who you select to work with. If you have questions about our procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubt persists, we are happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health profession for a second opinion.

MEETINGS

We normally conduct an evaluation that will last about two sessions. During this time, we can both decide if we are well-suited to work together in order to meet your treatment needs. If therapy is begun, we will usually schedule one session (one appointment hour of 40 to 53 minutes) per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be shorter, longer, or more frequent. Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation [unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control]. If it is possible, we will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment. Monday appointments need to be cancelled by 5pm on Friday. First time cancellations will be assessed a fee of \$75 while second time short-notice cancellations will be assessed a fee of \$150. If you miss or cancel two or more sessions within a two-month period, we reserve the right to offer your designated time to another client. Depending on the circumstances, we also reserve the right to discontinue or end our professional relationship. Should this occur, we will provide you with the name of other professionals who may work with you.

An appointment is a commitment to our work. We agree to meet here and to be on time. If we are ever unable to start on time, we ask your understanding. We also assure you that you will receive the full time agreed to. If you are late, we will probably be unable to meet for the full time, because it is likely that we will have another appointment after yours. A cancelled appointment delays our work. We will consider our meetings very important and ask you to do the same. Please try not to miss sessions if you can possibly help it. When you must cancel, please give at least 24-hour notice. Your session time is reserved for you. We are rarely able to fill a cancelled session unless we know in advance.

We request that you do not bring children with you if they are young and need babysitting or supervision, which we cannot provide. You will be charged for any damage to, or theft of, property in this office by you or anyone for whom you are legally responsible. We cannot be responsible for any personal property or valuables you bring into this office.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

For a doctoral level psychologist at CPHW, the standard fee is \$150 for a 40-53 minute session. Hour long sessions and initial evaluation meetings are \$180. For a master's level therapist at CPHW, standard fees are between \$95 and \$100 for a 40-53 minute session while hour-long meetings and initial evaluations are between \$110 and \$125. For other professional services, letter writing, consultations with other professionals (e.g. school, physicians, attorneys, etc.), doctor consultations, or conversations with you over the phone or email (for purposes other than scheduling an appointment or arranging payments) we will charge a rate of \$50 per quarter hour of service. Conversations lasting less than five minutes will not be charged. We charge a copying fee of \$0.50 per copy and all postage fees.

If you become involved in legal proceedings that require our participation, you will be expected to pay for professional time even if we are called to testify by another party. The charges pertain to preparation time, travel time and associated costs, waiting time and transportation costs. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, we charge \$400 per hour and a \$1000 retainer is required in advance.

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

Payment for services is expected at each session. Payments for other professional services will be agreed upon when they are requested. Phone contact or email contact charges are due at the time of the next face-to-face meeting or by charge over the phone. Be aware that only face-to-face services are reimbursed by insurance companies.

YOU, not your insurance company, are responsible for full payment of fees unless your CPHW therapist/psychologist has a contract with your insurance company to provide care at a pre-agreed fee. If you participate with one of the insurance companies of one of our staff members, please note that only deductibles or copayments are due at the time services are provided.

Returned checks will result in a charge of \$25 plus all bank fees.

If your account has not been paid by you or insurance for more than 60 days and arrangements have not been made to repay, we have the option of using legal means to secure the payment. Prior to use of legal means, CPHW will give you a reasonable chance to settle any outstanding balance. Legal methods of collection may involve use of a collection agency or small claims court. If such action is needed, its costs will be included. In most collection situations, Ramsbottom and Associates will only release name of client, nature of services provided (e.g. therapy), and the amount due. CPHW may terminate services for non-payment of fees.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A RELATIONSHIP WITH US

As professionals, we will use our best knowledge and skills to help you. This includes following the standards of the American Psychological Association, or APA. In your best interests, the APA puts limits on the relationship between a therapist and a client, and we will abide by these.

If you ever become involved in a divorce or custody dispute, we want you to understand and agree that we will not provide evaluations or expert testimony in court. You should hire a different mental health professional for any evaluations or testimony you require. This position is based on two reasons: (1) Our statements will be seen as biased in your favor because we have a therapy relationship; and (2) the testimony might affect our therapy relationship, and we must put this relationship first.

CONTACTING US

We are often not immediately available by phone, text, or email. While we are generally in the office from 9 to 5pm, we will not answer the phone when we are with clients. When we are unavailable, our phone is answered by voice mail which we monitor frequently. We will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. Our office does accept text messages. Please reserve text messaging to discuss appointment changes ONLY. Confidential information is not to be communicated through text messaging. In order to protect your privacy, when emailing information, please use the email associated with your *Therapy Appointment* account. If you are difficult to reach, please give us some times to contact you. If you are

unable to reach us and feel that you can't wait for a call back, please proceed to the nearest emergency room or call 911. If we are unavailable for extended times, we will provide the name of a colleague for you to contact, if necessary.

EMERGENCIES

In the event of a life-threatening emergency, go to the nearest emergency room immediately. When seeking emergency help, always specify the nature of the emergency. Depending on where you live, you may also contact a local crisis hotline, hospital, or community mental health center for phone support and/or instructions in an emergency or crisis. We can review the emergency resources in your area at your request.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

The laws and standards of our profession require us to keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of these records in our presence unless we believe that seeing them would be emotionally damaging. In this case, we can prepare a summary for you or forward them to another mental health professional of your choice. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. If you wish to review your records, we recommend you review them in the presence of Dr. Ramsbottom and/or your designated staff therapist so that we can discuss the contents. Clients will be charged an appropriate fee for any professional time spent in responding to information requests.

MINORS

If you are under the age of 18, please be aware that the law may provide your parents/legal guardians the right to examine your treatment records. It is our policy to request an agreement from parents that they agree to give up access to your records. If they agree, we will provide them with only general information about our work together, unless we feel there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or someone else. In this case, we will notify your parents of our concerns.

ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY

We will treat with great care all the information you share. It is your legal right that our sessions and our records about you be kept private. That is why we ask you to sign a "release-of-records" form before we can talk about you or send records about you to anyone else. The privacy of communications and release of records applies to individuals beginning at age 14. In general, we will tell no one what you tell us. We will not even reveal that you are receiving treatment. In all but a few rare situations, your confidentiality (that is, our privacy) is protected by federal and state laws and by the rules of my profession. Here are the most common cases in which confidentiality is NOT protected:

1. If you were sent by a court or an employer for evaluation or treatment, the court or employer expects a report from us. If this is your situation, please talk with us before you tell us anything you do not want the court or your employer to know. You have a right to tell us only what you are comfortable with telling.
2. Are you suing someone or being sued? Are you being charged with a crime? If so, and you tell the court that you are seeing us, we may then be ordered to show the court my records. Please consult your lawyer about these issues.
3. If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or another person, the law requires us to try to protect you or that other person. This usually means telling others about the threat. We cannot promise never to tell others about threats you make.
4. If we believe a child has been or will be abused or neglected, we are legally required to report this to the authorities.

There are two situations in which we might talk about part of your case with another therapist. We ask now for your understanding and agreement to let us do so in these two situations.

First, when we are away from the office for a few days, we will have a trusted fellow therapist "cover." This therapist will be available to you in emergencies. Therefore, he needs to know about you. Of course, this therapist is bound by the same laws and rules as we are to protect your confidentiality.

Second, we sometimes consult other therapists or other professionals about clients. This helps in giving high-quality treatment. These persons are also required to keep your information private. Your name will never be given to them, some information will be changed or omitted, and they will be told only as much as they need to know to understand your situation.

Except for situations like those we have described above, our office staff will always maintain your privacy. We also ask you not to disclose the name or identity of any other client being seen in this office. My office staff makes every effort to keep the names and records of clients private. My staff will try never to use your name on the telephone, if clients in the office can overhear it. All staff members who see your records have been trained in how to keep records confidential.

If your records need to be seen by another professional, or anyone else, we will discuss it with you. If you agree to share these records, you will need to sign an authorization form. This form states exactly what information is to be shared, with whom, and why, and it also sets time limits. You may read this form at any time. If you have questions, please ask me.

It is my office policy to destroy clients' records 15 years after the end of our therapy. Until then, we will keep your case records in a safe place.

If we must discontinue our relationship because of illness, disability, or other presently unforeseen circumstances, we ask you to agree to us transferring your records to another therapist who will assure their confidentiality, preservation, and appropriate access.