

General Information for Clients

Welcome to LaGrange Behavioral Health. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Although you should review these documents prior to your initial appointment, we will discuss them together and address any questions you might have. These documents will serve as a contract between us as client and provider.

Psychological Services

Therapy is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in psychotherapy, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. There are also legal limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. I, as your therapist, have corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

I believe you should feel comfortable with the therapist you choose and hopeful about the treatment. When you feel this way, therapy is more likely to be helpful to you. The foundation of my counseling approach is in a strong therapeutic relationship. It can be easier to make changes in your life while in a safe and accepting environment. I will draw on a number of perspectives and interventions that are based on psychological theories supported by research findings. I have found that many issues can be approached with some combination of cognitive behavioral therapy, interpersonal approach, and mindfulness. We will work together to determine what is most helpful to you.

If you have questions about your treatment, we should address them as they arise. Therapy is most effective if you are able to address questions and concerns in the moment. If you should continue to be uncertain about your diagnosis and/or treatment plan, we will discuss referral options so that you might seek treatment elsewhere.

The Benefits and Risks of Therapy

As with any treatment, there are some risks as well as benefits. You should think about both the benefits and risks when making any treatment decisions. Therapy can have a lasting impact on your life, but it may produce some unwanted emotions or discomfort throughout the process. You may find that exploring certain events or experiences may bring up sadness or anger. Realizations made in therapy

can lead to conflict in a client's relationship(s). We will work together to address these issues as they arise and to acknowledge their importance. Oftentimes it is difficult to avoid such discomfort when making substantial change. As your provider, I will work to assess progress towards the goals we agree on at the outset of treatment and discuss progress with you throughout treatment. This will give you some contrast between the discomfort that change brings and stagnation or lack of progress. In the event that you are not making progress, we will discuss the possibility that therapy may not be working despite our best efforts. As with any other treatment, there is a risk that therapy will not produce the desired outcome.

While you consider these risks, you should know also that the benefits of therapy have been supported by years of research (Seligman, 1995). * Many clients will find that they begin to regain a sense of control over their lives. Some will find that their symptoms subside or that their relationships with others have improved. Some find that they are more prepared to engage in a fulfilling life or to pursue goals outside of therapy. Feeling more hopeful can produce the change you have been waiting for.

Appointments

Appointments are typically 45-50 minutes in length; however, some appointments may be shorter or longer depending on immediate needs and the treatment plan. Many clients opt to meet once per week at an agreed upon time until goals are mostly met. Occasionally, clients may opt to meet once every other week or less often depending on their needs. Goals will be identified towards the beginning of treatment and progress will be assessed in an ongoing fashion. Once both the provider and client have concluded that goals have been met, treatment may be terminated or continued on a less frequent basis. This decision is guided by the severity of the initial problem, additional clinical issues added following the primary treatment plan, and client's need for support. Once it is determined that a client will stop treatment, I will work to assist the client in summarizing progress and to provide a smooth transition. Should clients desire to return in the future, they need only contact the office to initiate a follow up session. If a period of 12 months or more have passed, it may require a re-assessment of the treatment plan and goals.

* Seligman, M. E. (1995). The effectiveness of psychotherapy: The Consumer Reports study. *American psychologist*, 50(12), 965.

Professional Fees

The standard fee for the initial intake is \$150.00 and each follow-up session is \$145.00-\$130.00. Occasionally, clients request for additional time. If you request added time and I am able to accommodate that, an additional fee of \$25 for 15 minutes will be added to the total. Clients are responsible for paying at the time of their appointment unless prior arrangements have been made. Payment can be made by check, cash, or credit card. Credit card payments require basic information (name, amount, and service date) to be transmitted electronically, which can limit the confidentiality of the transaction. A fee of \$25.00 will be charged for any returned checks. You will be notified of your balance (should one accrue) on a regular basis and can inquire about your balance at any time. If you do not pay your due balance, I reserve the right to contact an attorney or collection agency to obtain payment.

The hourly follow-up appointment cost is applied to other professional services, prorated for the specific length of time. Services that you may be billed for include phone conversations lasting more than 15 minutes, report writing, attendance at consultations, or other non-therapy, treatment-related time. If you anticipate involvement in a court case that I may be court-ordered to appear for, we should discuss this as soon as possible. We will discuss related limits of confidentiality and costs related to my time spent prior to an appearance.

Cancellation Policy

The time scheduled for your appointment is assigned to you and you alone. If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I ask that you provide me with at least 24 hours notice. If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel with less than 24-hour notice, my policy is to collect the total amount of the session, regardless if you typically pay with insurance. Release from the cancellation policy due to unforeseen circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Clients should be aware that insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions. If it is possible, we will reschedule the appointment. I require, unless other agreed upon arrangements are made, each client to keep one active credit card on file to secure appointments. Appointments should begin and end on time (see **Professional Fees** for additional information) in order to insure each client receives allotted time. If the session begins late, it will still end at the scheduled end time.

This policy is in place to protect all of my clients. I work to make sure that my clients are able to be seen at their needed frequency. Reducing the incidence of late cancellations and no-show appointments allows for other clients to schedule appointments in these spaces. If I have earlier notice of a cancellation, I am able to offer that time to other clients who may be seeking that appointment time. In light of this policy, I work to maintain a consistent schedule to the best of my ability and allow for little to no waiting time for you.

Professional Records

I am required to keep accurate records of the services that I provide. I maintain all records in an encrypted, secure computer system. I will maintain the intake information collected, including identifying information, medical and mental health history, records from other treating providers, and payment information. For each appointment, I maintain brief records that note your attendance, diagnosis, treatment goal and related progress, and types of treatment interventions. You have the right to request your file and to have that file explained to you. As your treating provider, I recommend that we discuss your use of the information and meet to review the documents. This allows for a reduction in misinterpretation of the record. I am also happy to release (with your permission) your record to another mental health professional. Should I refuse your request for your records, you have the right to have my decision reviewed by another mental health professional. You may also make a written request that a copy of your file be made available to any other health care provider.

Confidentiality

It is important to me, as your provider, that you feel safe throughout your treatment. Part of this is feeling confident that your personal information is protected. I will work to insure the security of your information and discuss any necessary breaches (legal mandates, safety issues). As a part of professional practice and maintain high standards of care, I consult regularly with other mental health professionals. Typically, only specific clinical issues are discussed for the purpose of determining best practices and appropriate interventions. However, I will occasionally share de-identified information about a specific case to assess the related treatment plan. No names are shared nor any personally-identifying information. This professional practice encourages continued growth and self-awareness critical for providing care. The community we live in can feel interconnected. In the event that we would see one another in a setting outside of therapy, I will not initiate communication. You are welcome to address me, but know that I will not acknowledge you without your invitation. This allows you to share with others as little or as much as you would like about your treatment.

Parents and Minors

Privacy in treatment is important. However, parental/legal guardian involvement with the treatment of minors can also be important. If you are aged 13-17, we will discuss the parameters of what will and will not be discussed with your parent/legal guardian. Please keep in mind that parents/legal guardians have a legal right to access the medical and mental health records of minors in their care. However, therapeutic progress is most likely under conditions that allow both parties to feel comfortable about how information is being shared. I will request an agreement between all involved parties that allows for

general updates regarding treatment progress to be provided to parents/legal guardians. Beyond this agreement, there are exceptions related to safety concerns (see **Notice of Privacy Practices**). Any communication between myself and a parent/guardian will be discussed, if possible, in advance with the identified client (minor).

Communication and Crisis

My clients may reach me via telephone or the contact page available on my website. I am unable to answer calls while in session with a client, so I am often not immediately available. You may leave a brief message on my secure voicemail or through the contact page. Please keep messages brief and provide your name and contact information. I will reach out to you as soon as possible. I am typically closed if Monroe County Community School Corporation is closed; however, I will contact you should I need to cancel an appointment. If you cannot reach me and you or someone you know is unsafe, please seek immediate support. You may contact the nearest hospital or call 911. You may also contact the local Centerstone Crisis Helpline at 1-800-832-5442 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number at 1-800-273-8255.

OTHER RIGHTS

As with any service, if you are unsatisfied you may bring this to my attention. It is helpful for me to have the opportunity to address the source of your concerns or to identify a provider that is a better fit. Your independence and healthful functioning is of great concern to me. Professional standards maintain that our relationship is one restricted as provider and client. This prohibits most combined roles, such as friendships or business relationships. Should there be a discovery of an additional role at any point, we will discuss how to proceed as early as possible.

As a psychologist, I do not discriminate against clients based on any of the following factors: age, sex, marital/family status, race, religious or spiritual beliefs, ethnic origin, place of residence, veteran status, physical disability, health status, sexual identity, or criminal record (unrelated to present dangerousness). This stance is a personal and professional commitment, as well as being required by federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Should you believe you have been discriminated against, please bring this matter to my attention immediately.