**Ginger Holczer, Psy.D.** Creative Pathways

1531 E. Bradford Pkwy. Ste. 202 Phone: 417.890.1211

Springfield, MO 65804 Fax: 417.890.1271

Email: drgholczer@gmail.com

### OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT

**PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS OF COVID, FLU OR A COLD, CALL ME TO RESCHEDULE.**

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so that we can discuss them. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

# PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient, and the reasons you are coming to therapy . There are many different methods I may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. If psychotherapy is a new experience for you, it is very different than a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy also has been proven to be positive for people who go through it, allowing for insight into patterns, ways to develop better coping skills, and being able to assert yourself appropriately, which are a few of the benefits you may observe. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience. My hope is that whatever you’re experiencing, we can openly communicate about it, in order to give you the best possible outcome.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow, if you decide to continue with therapy. My goal is to be helpful to you, but I am not necessarily the best therapist for everyone. If this is something that happens, I am happy to help you find a better fit. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

# MEETINGS

I normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 2 to 4 sessions. During this time, we can both decide if I am the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If psychotherapy is begun, I will usually schedule one 50-minute session (one appointment hour of 50 minutes duration) at a time we agree on. 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, I will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.

# PROFESSIONAL FEES

My hourly fee is $150. In addition to weekly appointments, I charge this amount for other professional services you may need, though I will break down the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other services include report writing, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other service you may request of me.

# BILLING AND PAYMENTS

Payment is expected for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise or you have insurance coverage which requires another arrangement. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan.

I have a billing person that bills your insurance and will send you a statement about once every 3 months, if there is a balance for some reason. If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, I have the option of using legal means to secure the payment. In most collection situations, the only information I release regarding a patient’s treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

# INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT

If you have a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. My billing person will fill out forms and provide you with whatever assistance in helping you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; however, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of my fees. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers. In order to determine if I am in network and the copay/deductible information, I ask that you call the number on the back of your insurance card before the first appointment. This will avoid any surprises later from the insurance company.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize me to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes I 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, I 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. I will provide you with a copy of any report I submit, if you request it.

Once we have all of the information about your insurance coverage, we will discuss what we can expect to accomplish with the benefits that are available and what will happen if they run out before you feel ready to end our sessions. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself to avoid the problems described above, unless your insurance contract doesn’t permit it.

# CONTACTING ME

I am often not immediately available by telephone. While I am usually in my office between 11 AM and 7 PM Monday through Thursday, I probably will not answer the phone when I am with a patient. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by an answering machine that I monitor frequently. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform me of some times when you will be available. I will forward my office phone to my cell phone after hours, in case of an emergency. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you can’t wait for me to return your call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist [psychiatrist] on call. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

## PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

As I am sure you are aware, I am required to keep records of the professional services I provide [your treatment, or our work together.] These records are confidential and cannot be released without your permission. Exceptions to this are listed in the Confidentiality section of this document. If you are being seen as a couple, both parties must give consent before documents can be released.

Because these records contain information that can be misunderstood by someone who is not a mental health professional, it is my general policy that patients may not review them; however, I will provide at your request a treatment summary unless I believe that to do so would be emotionally damaging. If that is the case, I will be happy to send the summary to another mental health professional who is working with you. This service will be provided without any additional charge.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist is protected by law, and I can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. But there are a few exceptions.

In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent me from providing any information about your treatment. In some proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may order my testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if I have to reveal some information about a patient’s treatment. For example, if I believe that a child [elderly person, or disabled person] is being abused, I must file a report with the appropriate state agency.

If I believe that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient. If the patient threatens to harm himself/herself, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

These situations have rarely occurred in my practice. If a similar situation occurs, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have at our next meeting. I will be happy to discuss these issues with you if you need specific advice, but formal legal advice may be needed because the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex.

This is a lot of information to digest! I would rather give this to you in this format so that we can spend your first appointment getting to know each other and unraveling your story. I look forward to meeting you and seeing where this journey can go for you.

Be sure and sign the signature page that follows. This information is for you, all I need you to bring to your appointment is the signature page.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

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**Signature Date**