

# **Metropolitan Counseling Services**

## **INFORMED CONSENT FOR THERAPY**

It is very important that you read this document carefully before your next session. You may discuss any questions you have at that time. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and MCS. You may revoke this agreement in writing at any time.

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the therapist and patient, and the particular problems you are experiencing. There are many different methods your therapist may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be successful, you will have to work on things you and your therapist talk about both during your 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. You may decide to make changes that may impact your current relationships. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have many benefits. 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.

### **APPOINTMENT AND CANCELLATION POLICIES**

- You will be charged the full fee for any sessions that you miss without 24 hour advance notice of cancellation.
- You should arrive on time for all scheduled sessions.
- Your therapist agrees to appear on time for all scheduled sessions. If s/he does not show up for a scheduled session without first calling, or has inadvertently double booked and cannot see you, you will be given your next session free of charge.

### **FEES**

- You agree to pay the full cost of your therapy session at the time of service unless an alternative payment arrangement has been previously agreed upon.
- Sliding scale fees are based on total household income and number of dependents. If you feel you may qualify for a reduced fee, let your therapist know.
- You agree to notify your therapist as soon as you can increase the amount of your payment if you are on the sliding scale. This helps us be able to provide our services to additional clients.

### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

- Please immediately notify your therapist of any changes in your name, address, email, and/or phone numbers.

### **THERAPIST AVAILABILITY AND EMERGENCIES**

- MCS is not an emergency mental health service. Therefore, your therapist may not be available at all times, particularly after business hours, on weekends, and on holidays. Please speak with your individual therapist to get a written list of emergency services and telephone numbers which are available to you in the metro Atlanta area 24/7, and discuss what you should do in case of emergency, so that you know ahead of time and

will feel better prepared. Make sure you have help available should you need it from friends, family, a sponsor, a helpline, or an emergency center.

- Non-emergency phone calls will be returned within 1 business day.
- You may be charged for emergency telephone consultations in excess of 10 minutes
- Your therapist will inform you in advance when s/he is planning to be out of town for your regular appointment time. Another therapist in the practice will always be designated for on-call availability when your therapist is unavailable.

## **YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY AT MCS**

The law protects the privacy of all communications between a patient and a therapist. We follow federal guidelines (known as HIPAA) and also have additional policies to protect your privacy. Please carefully read the HIPAA information that is provided for you in the notebook in the waiting room. In addition, you should be aware of the following policies, which are common for mental health facilities:

- MCS uses a HIPAA compliant electronic charting system that stores client information and notes.
- Your therapist is a resident in training for licensure and is supervised by a licensed professional, who will be following your treatment so that you receive the highest standard of care. You have a right to know who your therapist's supervisor is, and to have his or her contact information made available to you.
- Since MCS is a psychotherapy training center, some of your sessions may be videotaped, so your therapist's supervisor can observe first-hand his or her work with you to ensure you are receiving the highest quality of care. Once this video is viewed by the supervisor it is immediately erased.
- From time to time you will be asked to fill out outcome measures regarding improvement or worsening of your symptoms, and surveys regarding your satisfaction with services at MCS. These documents allow us to closely monitor the quality of our services and improve them when needed. We appreciate your cooperation in filling out these forms, which will be provided for by your therapist.
- Your therapist participates in group supervision with other residents at MCS in which he or she may discuss aspects of your treatment, but will keep your identifying information private.
- Your information may be shared for specific purposes with other professional and administrative staff at MCS for clinical or administrative purposes, such as supervision, scheduling, billing and quality assurance. MCS residents and staff are bound by the same rules of confidentiality, and have received training about protecting your privacy.
- Your therapist works to avoid dual relationships when possible (i.e., committees, boards, or personal friendships). If your therapist should ever find him/herself in a social setting where you are present (e.g., shopping mall, restaurant, social event), your therapist will respect your privacy by not initiating contact or seeking to engage you in a conversation unless initiated by you. If your therapist is with family or friends, he/she will not introduce them to you.

There are some situations in which your therapist is legally obligated to take actions. These situations are extremely rare in our practice, but it is important that you know about them:

- If you are in imminent danger of harming yourself or someone else. This does not include *thinking* about suicide or homicide.

If your therapist has reason to believe that a child, or disabled or elderly adult is currently being abused, the law requires that s/he report it to the appropriate county Protective Services.

## **INTERACTIONS WITH THE LEGAL SYSTEM**

- MCS does not provide court ordered or mandated services. Therefore, your therapist will not be involved or engage in any legal issues or litigation in which you are a party to at any time either during your counseling or after counseling terminates. This would include any interaction with the Court system, attorneys, Guardian ad Litem, psychological evaluators, alcohol and drug evaluators, or any other contact with the legal system.
- In the event that you wish to have a copy of your file, and execute a proper release, your therapist will provide you with a copy of your record, and you will be responsible for charges in producing that record.
- If you believe it necessary to subpoena your therapist to testify at a deposition or a hearing, you would be responsible for his or her expert witness fees in the amount of \$1,500.00 for one-half (1/2) day to be paid five (5) days in advance of any court appearance or deposition. Any additional time spent over one-half (1/2) day would be billed at the rate of \$375.00 per hour including travel time. Also, if you subpoena your therapist, he or she may elect not to speak with your attorney, and a subpoena may result in your therapist withdrawing as your counselor.