

## HPS INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for choosing Hanna Psychological Services, PC (HPS) for your therapeutic support. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. When you sign your agreement with this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. We can discuss any questions you have when you sign them or at any time in the future.

Psychotherapy involves a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in counseling, 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. Please review them, ask questions about anything you would like clarified, and sign at the end to indicate that you agree to our work together.

### **Benefits and Risks of Participating in Psychotherapy**

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient, and the particular problems you bring forward. There are many different methods I may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like 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 has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. 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.

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. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. 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.

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## **Meetings**

I normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 2 to 3 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 usually recommend that we meet weekly or every other week for at least 6 appointments (including evaluation appointments). I find that this helps everyone involved have a sense of each other and how to work together before determining whether or not to meet less frequently. Each appointment will typically last between 45 and 55 minutes.

## **Cancellations**

Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation [or if 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.

## **Contacting Me**

I am often not immediately available by telephone. While I am usually in my office between during the hours posted on my website (<http://hannapsych.com>), I probably will not answer the phone when I am with a patient. I use Google Voice phone service, which means that your voicemails and text messages could be accessed if someone looked for them on Google's servers. As a result, you may want to limit the information you share in your message. I will make every effort to return your call as soon as possible and no longer than within one business day. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or 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.

## **Social Media**

You may come across some of my social media profiles. I choose not to connect (via friending, linking, following, etc.) with current or former clients. Doing so could blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship or unintentionally compromise your confidentiality. Unless I believe you are in imminent danger and cannot reach you by any other means, I will not seek out any information posted about you online without your consent.

## **Professional Records**

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of your records, or I can prepare a summary for you instead. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. If you wish to see your records, I recommend that you review them in my presence so that we can discuss the contents. I am sometimes willing to conduct a review meeting without charge. Patients will be charged an appropriate fee for any professional time spent in responding to information requests.

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## Minors

If you are under eighteen years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents the right to examine your treatment records. It is my policy to request an agreement from parents that they agree to give up access to your records. If they agree, I will provide them only with general information about our work together, unless I feel there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or someone else. In this case, I will notify them of my concern. I will also provide them with a summary of your treatment when it is complete. Before giving them any information, I will discuss the matter with you, if possible, and do my best to handle any objections you may have with what I am prepared to discuss.

## 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 am required to 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.

I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my patient. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I feel that it is important to our work together.

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, and I am not an attorney. If you request, I will provide you with relevant portions or summaries of the state laws regarding these issues.

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