



## Office Policies & Procedures

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### **INFORMED CONSENT**

#### **Introduction**

This Agreement is intended to provide Clients with important information regarding the practices, policies and procedures of **Glendale-Arcadia-Counseling** (herein “Center”), and to clarify the terms of the professional therapeutic relationship between the clinical treatment provider (herein “GAC”) and Client. Any questions or concerns regarding the contents of this Agreement should be discussed with your GAC Provider prior to signing it or during their time in treatment.

#### **The Therapist - Client Relationship**

A strong and trusting therapeutic relationship is critical in producing the most successful results in treatment. From time to time, misunderstandings or miscommunication are likely to happen. It is very important that both the Client and the GAC Provider recognize the importance of speaking directly to problems, concerns or misunderstandings right away. This process in itself provides a healing experience as we learn to listen to each other actively and communicate with openness and respect.

#### **Commitment to Treatment Goals**

The Client and the GAC Provider work as partners to master the defined agreed upon treatment goals. The GAC Provider commits to employ professional skills to most effectively address the Client’s treatment goals. The Center Provider will also honestly inform the Client when there is an issue that does not fall within his/her skill set or scope of practice and will make diligent efforts to assist in finding the expertise needed to meet those goals. Therapy is an active process that requires effort, homework and practice. Clients need also to commit to develop the new skills and understandings needed to meet their treatment goals.

#### **Therapist Availability**

GAC’s office is equipped with a confidential voice mail system that allows Client to leave a message at any time. The GAC Provider will make every effort to return calls within 24 hours (or by the next business day), but cannot guarantee the calls will be returned immediately. GAC is unable to provide 24-hour crisis service. In the event that a Client is feeling unsafe or requires immediate medical or psychiatric assistance, he/she should call 911, or go to the nearest emergency facility.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Therapy**

Psychotherapy is a process in which Provider and Client discuss a myriad of issues, events, experiences and memories for the purpose of creating positive change or reduce identified symptoms or remove barriers to living life more fully. It provides an opportunity to better, and more deeply understand oneself, as well as, any problems or difficulties a Client may be experiencing. Psychotherapy is a joint effort between Client and GAC Provider. Progress and success may vary depending upon the particular problems or issues being addressed, as well as many other factors.

Participating in therapy may result in a number of benefits to a Client, including, but not limited to, reduced stress and anxiety, a decrease in negative thoughts and self-sabotaging behaviors, improved interpersonal relationships, increased comfort in social, work, and family settings, increased capacity for intimacy, and increased self-confidence. Such benefits may also require substantial effort on the part of a Client, including an active participation in the therapeutic process, honesty, and a willingness to change feelings, thoughts and behaviors. There is no guarantee that therapy will yield any or all of the benefits listed above.

Participating in therapy may also involve some discomfort, including remembering and discussing unpleasant events, feelings and experiences. The process may evoke strong feelings of sadness, anger, fear, etc. There may be times in which the therapeutic process will challenge a Client’s perceptions and assumptions, and offer different perspectives. The issues presented by a Client may result in unintended outcomes, including changes in personal relationships. A Client needs to be



aware that any decision on the status of his/her personal relationships is under the responsibility of the Client.

During the therapeutic process, some Clients find that they feel worse before they feel better. This can be part of a normal course of events. Personal growth and change may be easy and swift at times, but may also be slow and frustrating. A Client needs to address any concerns he/she has regarding his/her progress in therapy with his/her GAC Provider.

#### **Professional Consultation**

Professional consultation is an important component of a healthy psychotherapy practice. As such, the GAC Provider regularly participates in clinical, ethical, and legal consultation with appropriate professionals. During such consultations, GAC Provider will not reveal any personally identifying information regarding Client.

#### **Confidentiality**

The information disclosed by a Client is generally confidential and will not be released to any third party without written authorization from Client, except where required or permitted by law. Exceptions to confidentiality, include, but are not limited to, reporting child, elder and dependent adult abuse; when a Client makes a serious threat of violence towards a reasonably identifiable victim; when a Client is dangerous to him/herself or the person or property of another; if your mental condition becomes an issue in a lawsuit; if you fail to assume responsibility for payment of services provided to you or person who you are responsible for; or other circumstances which have been agreed upon in advance by the Client and GAC Provider.

#### **Other Services**

From time-to-time, the Therapist may engage in telephone contact with the Client or other parties at client's request for purposes other than scheduling sessions. The Client is responsible for payment of the agreed upon fee for any telephone calls or generation of reports. Other services available to a client may be Consultation, Group Therapy, Coaching, Skills Training, etc. Fees for these services will be discussed prior to implementation.

#### **Records and Record Keeping**

The GAC Provider may take notes during session, and will also produce other notes and records regarding Client's treatment. These notes constitute GAC Provider's clinical and business records, which by law, the GAC Provider is required to maintain. Such records are the sole property of the GAC Provider. The GAC Provider will abide by HIPAA regulations and professional standards. The GAC Provider will maintain Client's records for seven years following termination of therapy and seven years past majority age for minors. However, after ten years, the Client's records will be destroyed in a manner that preserves the Client's confidentiality. If you have any questions regarding records, please call Glendale-Arcadia-Counseling at 818-476-0111

#### **Financial Policies, Fees and Payments**

**The Client/Responsible Party is expected to pay for services at the time services are rendered.** GAC accepts cash, checks and debit/credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express). GAC reserves the right to periodically adjust fees. The Client/Responsible Party will be notified of any fee adjustment in advance. Responsible Parties/Payers must sign all sections of this document where applicable.

In addition, the fees may be adjusted by agreement between the Client and the GAC Provider or by contract with third-party payors (e.g., insurance companies, responsible party, etc.) The client account will be adjusted once confirmation of adjustment is approved.

#### **Cancellation Policy**

Cancellations of appointments need to be made at least 24 hours in advance of a scheduled appointment unless other arrangements have been made with Client for specified reasons. The Client is responsible for payment of 50% of the fee for any session(s) that he/she fails to attend when providing less than 2 hours' notice of cancellation. Cancellation notices are to be left on the GAC Provider's voicemail.

#### **Termination of Therapy**

The Client has the right to terminate therapy at his/her discretion. GAC Provider also reserves the right to terminate



therapy at his/her discretion. Upon either party's decision to terminate therapy, the GAC Provider will generally recommend that the Client participate in at least one, or possibly more, termination sessions. These sessions are intended to facilitate a positive termination experience and give both parties an opportunity to reflect on the work that has been done. The GAC Provider will also attempt to ensure a smooth transition to another therapist by offering referrals to Client. Reasons for termination include, but are not limited to, a mutual decision by Client and GAC Provider that alternative treatment is in the best interest of the Client, failure to comply with treatment recommendations, conflicts of interest, failure to participate in therapy, untimely payment of fees, Client needs are outside of GAC Provider's scope of competence or practice, or Client is not making adequate progress in therapy.

#### **Psychotherapist-Client Privilege**

The information disclosed by the Client, as well as any records created, is subject to the Psychotherapist-Client privilege. The Psychotherapist-Client privilege results from the special relationship between a Center Provider and Client in the eyes of the law. It is akin to the attorney-client privilege or the doctor-client privilege. Typically, the Client is the holder of the Psychotherapist-Client privilege. If a GAC Provider received a subpoena for records, deposition testimony, or testimony in a court of law, the GAC Provider will assert the Psychotherapist-Client privilege on the Client's behalf until instructed, in writing, to do otherwise by the Client or Client's Representative, within the limits of the law. A Client needs to be aware that he/she might be waiving the Psychotherapist-Client privilege if he/she makes his/her mental or emotional state an issue in a legal proceeding. A Client may address any concerns he/she might have regarding the Psychotherapist-Client privilege with his/her attorney.

#### **Client Litigation**

The GAC Provider will not voluntarily participate in any litigation, or custody dispute in which the Client and another individual, or entity, are parties. The GAC Provider has a policy of not communicating with Client's attorney and will generally not write or sign letters, reports, declarations, or affidavits to be used in a Client's legal matter. The GAC Provider will generally not provide records or testimony unless compelled to do so. Should the GAC Provider be subpoenaed, or ordered by a court of law to appear as a witness in an action involving Client, the Client agrees to reimburse the GAC Provider for any time spent for preparation, travel, or other time in which the GAC Provider has made him/herself available for such an appearance at GAC Provider's rate of \$350 per hour.

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