



**Boules Clinical
Psychology Group, PLLC**

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**Office Policies and Consent form for Psychological Services
And Electronic Communication Policy**

Welcome to our practice. Your first appointment with a new psychologist is important and you may have questions for us. This letter is to introduce us and give you information about our professional services and business policies. It will also help you decide if we can work together. Please take time to read carefully, jotting down questions you might have so that we can discuss them. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Psychological Services: The Process of Therapy and Evaluation

During our first session together, we will evaluate whether we can be a benefit to you. We do not accept patients that we believe we cannot help. You should evaluate this information along with your opinions about whether you feel comfortable working with us. For this reason, we may recommend a referral to someone who might be more helpful. Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and the patient, and the particular issues you may have. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for an 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. Because 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 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. However, there are no guarantees as to what you will experience.

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 our procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise.

Meetings

We normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 2 to 4 sessions. During this time, we can both decide if we are the best clinicians to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If we agree to begin psychotherapy, we will usually schedule one (45 minute) session (one appointment hour of 45 minutes duration) per week, at the time we agree on, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent. 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 possible, we will try to find another time to reschedule your appointment. It is important to remember the scheduled appointment is time that we have allocated for our work together.

Professional Fees and Payments

Our standard fee is \$250.00 for an initial intake session and \$200.00 for 45-minute follow-up psychotherapy sessions. The fee is to be paid at the beginning of each session unless other arrangements have been made. We have found that payment at the beginning of each session works best. We reserve the right to increase rates annually. You will be notified. For your convenience, we accept Visa, MC, Discover and PayPal in addition to cash and personal check.

We do not allow patients to carry a balance of more than two sessions. If you are unable to pay your sessions fees, we can discuss whether it makes sense to pause therapy or come up with an alternative payment plan so that you can avoid incurring additional debt.

If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, we have the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information we release regarding a patient's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

Occasionally patients experience financial hardships. We generally hold a limited number of spots for current patients that have life transitions occur that impact their ability to pay full fees. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, we may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installation plan. If we are unable to accommodate your financial situation, we will provide you with referrals.

Insurance

We are a provider for BC/BS PPO and Medicare and will submit claims for you if you have either health care policies. Otherwise, we are considered an out-of-network provider. If you wish to submit a claim to your insurance company for reimbursement, we can provide you with a superbill (a billing statement at the end of each month). This statement is your receipt for insurance purposes or tax purposes. Depending on your health insurance some or all of your fees may be covered. Insurance companies vary in reimbursement practices for psychotherapy. It is your responsibility to verify the specifics of your coverage. We will fill out forms and provide you with whatever assistance we can in helping you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; however, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of our fees. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers.

Health Insurance and Confidentiality of Records

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require that we provide them with your clinical diagnosis. Sometimes we have to provide additional clinical information, such as treatment plans, progress notes or summaries, or copies of the entire record (in rare cases). This information will become part of the insurance company files. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, we 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. We will provide you with a copy of any records we submit, if you request it. **You understand that, by using your insurance, you authorize us to release such information to your insurance company. We will try to keep that information limited to the minimum necessary.**

Once we have all of the information about your insurance coverage, we will discuss what we can accomplish with the benefits that are available. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for our services yourself to avoid the problems described above (unless prohibited by the insurance contract).

Contacting us: Phone calls, Emails and Emergencies

We are often not immediately available by telephone. While we may be in the office, we probably will not answer the phone when we are with a patient. When we are unavailable, our telephone is answered by voice mail that we frequently monitor. We will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it or within 24 hours, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please give us some specific times when you will be available. We will try our best to reach you during those times. If we will be unavailable for an extended period, we will provide you with a name of a colleague to contact, in the event of an emergency.

If you should have small administrative matters for example checking appointment times or rescheduling, or more serious matters that arise between sessions, please leave a confidential voice mail for us at (630) 321-9809. We check our messages throughout the day unless we are out of town. If we schedule a trip out of town, we will notify you in advance.

If an emergency comes up and you need to speak with us immediately, we provide consultations of five minutes or less for free. If, however, we spend more than five minutes in a week on the phone, or if you leave more than five minutes worth of phone messages in a week, we will charge you on a prorated basis for that time.

If you have a need for many phone calls to us and feel your concerns cannot wait until your next session, we may want to reevaluate and add more sessions to accommodate your needs. If an emergency arises, please indicate it clearly in your voice mail to us. If your emergency is acute in nature and you need to speak with someone right away, contact the nearest 24-hour emergency room, psychiatric service or call 911.

Electronic Communication Policy

In order to maintain clarity regarding our use of electronic modes of communication during your treatment, we have prepared the following policy. This is because the use of various types of electronic communications is common in our society, and many individuals believe this is a preferred method of communication with others, whether their relationships are social or professional. Many of these common modes of communication, however, put your privacy at risk and can be inconsistent with the law and with the standards of our profession. Consequently, this policy has been prepared to assure the security and confidentiality of your treatment and to assure that it is consistent with ethics and the law.

Email Communications – We use email communication only with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. Please do not email us about clinical matters because email is not a secure way to contact us. If you need to discuss a clinical matter with us, please call so we can discuss it on the phone or wait so we can discuss it during your next therapy session. The telephone or face-to-face context simply is much more secure as a mode of communication.

Text Messaging – Because text messaging is a very unsecure and impersonal mode of communication, we do not text message to nor do we respond to text messages from anyone in treatment with us. So, please do not text message us unless we have made other arrangements.

Social Media – We do not communicate with, or contact, any of our patients through social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. In addition, if we discover that we have accidentally established an online relationship with you, we will cancel that relationship. This is because these types of casual social contacts can create significant security risks for you.

We may participate on various social networks, but not in any professional capacity. If you have an online presence, there is a possibility that you may encounter one of us by accident. If that occurs, please discuss it during our time together. We believe that communications with clients online have a high potential to compromise the professional relationship. In addition, please do not try to contact us in this way. We will not respond and will terminate any online contact no matter how accidental.

Websites – We have a website that you are free to access. We use it for professional reasons to provide information to others about our practice. You are welcome to access and review this information that we have on our website and, if you have questions about it, we should discuss this during your therapy sessions.

Web Searches – We will not use web searches to gather information about you without your permission. We believe that this violates your privacy rights; however, we understand that you might choose to gather information about us in this way. In this day and age there is an incredible amount of information about individuals on the internet, much of which may actually be known to that person and some of which may be inaccurate or unknown. If you encounter information about us through web searches, or in any other fashion for that matter, please discuss this with us during our time together so that we can deal with it and its potential impact on your treatment.

Recently, it has become fashionable for patients to review their health care provider on various websites. Unfortunately, mental health professionals cannot respond to such comments and related errors because of confidentiality restrictions. If you encounter such reviews of us or any professional with whom you are working, please share it with us so we can discuss it and its potential impact on your therapy.

Cancellations and Lateness

Cancelled and missed appointments can present issues for both of us. First, it is important to recognize that at times therapy can be challenging and difficult work. You may feel like you want to avoid or not come to your session for this reason. If this occurs, we would prefer we discuss

this as opposed to you missing or avoid your session. Secondly, we hold your appointment time specifically for you. We see a limited number of patients. We do this so that we can give you the quality time needed to focus on your issues. It is difficult for us to fill your last-minute cancelled session or short notice. For this reason, we charge for appointments cancelled **with less than 24-hour notice**, unless we can find another time in the week that works for both of our schedules. If you should run late for your appointment, please call us as soon as possible and let us know. If we do not hear from you **within 20 minutes** into your session, we will not check on you and assume you are not coming to your appointment. If you are late for your appointment, we will end our session at the regularly scheduled time. This allows us to get ready for our next appointment and not cause our next patient's session to run late.

Confidentiality

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

When Disclosure May Be Required: In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent us from providing any information about your treatment. In some proceedings, for instance those involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may order our testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it.

When Disclosure is Required: There are some situations in which we are legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if we have to reveal some information about a patient's treatment. For example, if we believe that a child, elderly person, or dependent person is being abused or neglected, we must file a report with the appropriate state agency. Additional instances include, but are not limited to, a reasonable suspicion of financial abuse, abandonment, isolation or abduction of an elder or dependent adult.

If we believe that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, we are 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, we 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 our practice. If a similar situation occurs, we will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

Consultation: In order to provide our patients with the best possible service, we may consult with other professionals. During a consultation, names or other identifying information are never mentioned; patient identity remains completely anonymous and your confidentiality will be fully maintained. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, we will not tell you about these consultations unless we feel that it is important to our work together. If we think it is important to have an in-depth consultation with another professional and identifying information about you may be shared, we will have you sign a release of information giving us permission to share this information.

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. We 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 we are not attorneys.

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

Patient signature _____ Date _____