



Advocates of the Bemidji Area

Mental Health Counseling/Therapy Agreement

Welcome! We are delighted that you have chosen to work with us and excited to begin our journey together. This letter will provide you with information about policies and procedures and ensure a mutual understanding about our professional relationship. Please ask questions if the information is not clear or if you need more information!

Overview of Services: Counseling is a collaborative process undertaken between you and a therapist, designed to empower you to accomplish mental health and wellness goals. For counseling to be most effective, it is important that you take an active role in the process.

Potential Benefits of Therapy: The trusting and authentic therapeutic relationship formed between us can be transformative. Often it can be healing simply to be truly heard and understood. A therapist can offer new perspectives and provide insight moving you towards your personal goals. Other benefits of therapy may include increasing mindfulness and self-awareness, overcoming specific problem areas such as depression or anxiety, discerning who you really want to be and how you want to live your life, and finding resolution to the concerns that led you into therapy. These benefits are best achieved when you assume an active role in the process and apply what is learned in therapy to real-life situations.

Potential Risks of Therapy: Before we begin, you should understand that there is a possibility that you will, for a time, experience uncomfortable levels of sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other difficult feelings. You may recall unpleasant memories. Relationships are often affected because of therapy. Significant relationships may experience varying degrees of tension. This is often most prevalent within family relationships but may extend beyond into one's social and professional life. Sometimes, problems may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment. Therapy is a powerful, dynamic process and these types of risks are to be expected as a natural element of making significant changes.

Confidentiality: Your therapist will keep confidential anything you disclose, with the following exceptions: a) you direct the therapist to tell someone, b) The therapist has reason to believe you are in imminent danger of harming yourself or others, c) The therapist is ordered by a court of law to disclose information, d) you report abuse or neglect of a child, or a handicapped or elderly person (by you or someone else). If you submit therapy sessions for reimbursement through an insurance company, they may require that diagnosis or treatment information be reported. The therapist may also discuss issues related to your session with a supervisor or consultant. In these situations, your name and identifying information will be kept confidential.

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In addition, if you choose family counseling, please be advised that the therapist reserves the right to introduce information into family sessions that is disclosed in any individual sessions.

Fees Paid at Time of Service: Currently, the fee is on a sliding scale. To facilitate a smooth flow of time together, it is our practice to collect fees at the end of our session. Outside consultation with doctors, schools, agencies, courts, etc. will be charged at the agreed upon hourly rate including any time required to prepare the necessary documentation or information.

Sessions last for 53 minutes. Because the schedule requires that we end sessions promptly, if you arrive late for a scheduled appointment, you may not be able to complete the entire 53-minute session. Please make every effort to be punctual so that we can make the most of our scheduled time together.

On average, clients work with a therapist between six months and one year, with many finishing within 12 sessions. The counseling relationship is a partnership in achieving happiness, acceptance and self-awareness in ways that move you towards a happier sense of being. Some goals for therapy may take only a few sessions to complete, while others may take several weeks, months, or years to be fully realized.

Usually, counseling sessions will be held on a weekly basis as we begin to uncover your goals and gain momentum in the counseling process. Once you begin to see the changes that you are hoping for, we may readjust our scheduled meetings as you begin to rely on the resources you will rediscover in yourself. Please make appointment cancellations or changes before 24 hours of your scheduled appointment by phone or by E-mail or you may be charged 50% of the sliding fee amount. Please note that insurance companies will not reimburse for missed sessions.

If you prefer to utilize Telehealth. We do have access to a private and confidential platform. There are benefits and risks to using telehealth. The benefits include access to a counseling session without the need to leave your home. The risks include privacy and confidentiality concerns if others are in your home and there may be unplanned technology related interruptions. If you choose this option, you will need to find a private space and have access to the internet with a speed that can handle the telehealth audio and video requirements. If you choose this option, more time will be spent to go over specific information related to telehealth.

The therapeutic relationship is unique and will be reserved for the counseling room. The relationship with your therapist is strictly a professional and therapeutic one and is the only type of relationship we may have. If I should see you outside of our scheduled sessions, my

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primary concern is your privacy. I will not approach you, but please feel free to approach me and say hello.

Not all forms of communication are considered confidential. If you decide to engage in text messaging, we will assume that you are aware of and accept the possible risks to confidentiality through this form of communication. The best way to get in touch with the therapist between sessions is through voicemail. Emergency phone calls less than 10 minutes are normally free; however, longer phone calls will be billed at a pro-rated hourly rate. Phone sessions are available by appointment. Please note, we do not respond to phone calls before 9 AM and after 5PM until the next business day, nor on weekends. In case of an emergency, please contact the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Hotline at 800-422-0045, TEXT MN TO 741741, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255, or call 911.

The therapist agrees to make reasonable efforts to ensure proper continuation of care. If termination (ending therapy) occurs prior to the completion of client-stated goals, the therapist agrees to make reasonable efforts to provide clients alternative counseling sources, taking into adequate consideration the client's psychological needs and ability to pay. The therapist may attempt to make contact through phone, e-mail, or in writing to the client's address on record. After two months without contact or an understanding about continuation of care, the therapist will officially close your therapy file. Should you decide to re-enter the therapeutic relationship, the file can always be re-opened. We will contact you before the file is closed to remind you about the termination process.

Please review our agency's Privacy Practices. By signing this agreement, you are also acknowledging that you have been offered or received a copy of the Privacy Practices.

To file a formal complaint against a licensed professional you can review the information at the Minnesota Board of Social Work website: <https://mn.gov/boards/social-work/public/> or contact the MN Board of Social Work, 2829 University Ave SE Suite #340, Minneapolis MN 55414, (612) 617-2100; (888) 234-1320; FAX (612) 617-2103, or email: Social.work@state.mn.us.

Emergency/After Hours: If you have a life-threatening crisis, please call 9-1-1. Most hospital emergency rooms can give live-saving services. Help is also available 24 hours a day by calling the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Hotline at 800-422-0045, TEXT MN TO 741741, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255.

If you have any questions that have not been addressed above, please do not hesitate to ask. We look forward to working together!

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Signature Page

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and agree to accept all provisions described on the Advocates of the Bemidji Area Mental Health Counseling/Therapy Agreement and agree to enter the counseling relationship. I also agree that I have been offered/given the Privacy Policy.

Printed Name:

Signature:

Date:

For Minors Only

If the person participating in services is not yet eighteen (18) years old, both parents or the legal guardian(s) must sign below. In exchange for my/our child being allowed to participate in the telehealth services and as the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the above-named individual, I/we verify that I/we fully understand, agree to, and accept all provisions of the Advocates of the Bemidji Area Mental Health Counseling/Therapy Agreement.

Printed Name (Parent or Legal Guardian):

Signature:

Date:

Printed Name (Parent or Legal Guardian):

Signature:

Date:

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