

Renewing Hope

COUNSELING SERVICE

Office Policies and General Information Agreement for Psychotherapy Services and Informed Consent for Psychotherapy

CONFIDENTIALITY: All information disclosed within sessions and the written records pertaining to those sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission except where disclosure is required by law.

WHEN DISCLOSURE IS REQUIRED OR MAY BE REQUIRED BY LAW: Some of the circumstances where disclosure is required or may be required by law are: where there is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent, or elder abuse or neglect; where a client presents a danger to self, to others, to property, or is gravely disabled; or when a client's family members communicate to me that the client presents a danger to others. Disclosure may also be required pursuant to a legal proceeding by or against you. If you place your mental status at issue in litigation initiated by you, the defendant may have the right to obtain the psychotherapy records and/or testimony by me. In couples and family therapy, or when different family members are seen individually, even over a period of time, confidentiality and privilege do not apply between the couple or among family members, unless otherwise agreed upon. We will use clinical judgment when revealing such information. Renewing Hope will not release records to any outside party unless we are authorized to do so by all adult parties who were part of the family therapy, couple therapy or other treatment that involved more than one adult client.

EMERGENCY: If there is an emergency during therapy, or in the future after termination, where your therapist becomes concerned about your personal safety, the possibility of you injuring someone else, or about you receiving proper psychiatric care, we will do whatever we can within the limits of the law, to prevent you from injuring yourself or others and to ensure that you receive the proper medical care. For this purpose, we may also contact the person whose name you have provided as your emergency contact on the intake form.

HEALTH INSURANCE & CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS: Disclosure of confidential information may be required by your health insurance carrier or HMO/PPO/MCO/EAP in order to process the claims. Renewing Hope has no control over, or knowledge of, what insurance companies do with the information submitted or who has access to this information. You must be aware that submitting a

mental health invoice for reimbursement carries a certain amount of risk to confidentiality, privacy or to future capacity to obtain health or life insurance or even a job.

LITIGATION LIMITATION: Due to the nature of the therapeutic process and the fact that it often involves making a full disclosure with regard to many matters which may be of a confidential nature, it is agreed that, should there be legal proceedings (such as, but not limited to divorce and custody disputes, injuries, lawsuits, etc.), neither you nor your attorney(s), nor anyone else acting on your behalf will call on your therapist or Renewing Hope to testify in court or at any other proceeding, nor will a disclosure of the psychotherapy records be requested unless otherwise agreed upon.

CONSULTATION: Renewing Hope consults regularly with other professionals regarding its clients; however, each client's identity remains completely anonymous and confidentiality is fully maintained.

E-MAILS, CELL PHONES, COMPUTERS, AND FAXES: It is very important to be aware that computers and email communication can be relatively easily accessed by unauthorized people and hence can compromise the privacy and confidentiality of such communication. Faxes can easily be sent erroneously to the wrong address. Emails, in particular, are vulnerable to unauthorized access due to the fact that Internet servers have unlimited and direct access to all emails that go through them. It is important that you be aware that emails, faxes, and important texts are part of the medical records. Additionally, Renewing Hope's emails are not encrypted. Renewing Hope's computers are equipped with a firewall, a virus protection, and a password and all confidential information is backed up on a regular basis. Please notify Renewing Hope if you decide to avoid or limit in any way the use of any or all communication devices, such as email, cell phone, or faxes. If you communicate confidential or private information via email, Renewing Hope will assume that you have made an informed decision to do so.

RECORDS AND YOUR RIGHT TO REVIEW THEM: Both the law and the standards of Renewing Hope profession require that treatment records are kept for at least 7 years. Unless otherwise agreed to be necessary, Renewing Hope retains clinical records only as long as is mandated by Nebraska law. If you have concerns regarding your treatment records, please discuss them with Renewing Hope. As a client, you have the right to review or receive a summary of your records at any time, except in limited legal or emergency circumstances or when Renewing Hope assesses that releasing such information might be harmful in any way. In such a case, Renewing Hope will provide the records to an appropriate and legitimate mental health professional of your choice. Considering all of the above exclusions, if it is still appropriate, and upon your request, Renewing Hope will release information to any agency/person you specify unless Renewing Hope assesses that releasing such information might be harmful in any way. When more than one client is involved in treatment, such as in cases of couples and family therapy, Renewing Hope will release records only with signed authorizations from all the adults (or all those who legally can authorize such a release) involved in the treatment.

TELEPHONE & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES: If you need to contact Renewing Hope between sessions, please leave a message with your therapist and your call will be returned as soon as possible. Renewing Hope therapists check messages a few times during the daytime. If an emergency situation arises, indicate it clearly in your message and if you need to talk to someone right away call the 24-hour crisis line: (402) 475-6695 or call 911. Please do not use email or faxes for emergencies. Renewing Hope does not always check email or faxes daily.

MEDIATION & ARBITRATION: All disputes arising out of, or in relation to, this agreement to provide psychotherapy services shall first be referred to mediation, before, and as a pre-condition of, the initiation of arbitration. The mediator shall be a neutral third party chosen by agreement of Renewing Hope and the client(s). The cost of such mediation, if any, shall be split equally, unless otherwise agreed upon. In the event that mediation is unsuccessful, any unresolved controversy related to this agreement should be submitted to and settled by binding arbitration in Nebraska in accordance with the rules of the American Arbitration Association which are in effect at the time the demand for arbitration is filed. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in the event that your account is overdue (unpaid) and there is no agreement on a payment plan, Renewing Hope can use legal means (court, collection agency, etc.) to obtain payment. The prevailing party in arbitration or collection proceedings shall be entitled to recover a reasonable sum as and for attorney's fees. In the case of arbitration, the arbitrator will determine that sum.

THE PROCESS OF THERAPY/EVALUATION AND SCOPE OF PRACTICE: Participation in therapy can result in a number of benefits to you, including improving interpersonal relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to seek therapy. Working toward these benefits, however, requires effort on your part. Psychotherapy requires your very active involvement, honesty, and openness in order to change your thoughts, feelings, and/or behavior. You will be asked for feedback and views on your therapy, its progress, and other aspects of the therapy and will expect you to respond openly and honestly. Sometimes more than one approach can be helpful in dealing with a certain situation. During evaluation or therapy, remembering or talking about unpleasant events, feelings, or thoughts can result in you experiencing considerable discomfort or strong feelings of anger, sadness, worry, fear, etc., or experiencing anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc. You may be challenged on some of your assumptions or perceptions or propose different ways of looking at, thinking about, or handling situations, which can cause you to feel very upset, angry, depressed, challenged, or disappointed. Attempting to resolve issues that brought you to therapy in the first place, such as personal or interpersonal relationships, may result in changes that were not originally intended. Psychotherapy may result in decisions about changing behaviors, employment, substance use, schooling, housing, or relationships. Sometimes a decision that is positive for one family member is viewed quite negatively by another family member. Change will sometimes be easy and swift, but more often it will be slow and even frustrating. There is no guarantee that psychotherapy will yield positive or intended results. During the course of therapy, your therapist will likely use various psychological approaches according, in part, to the problem that is being treated and my assessment of what will best benefit you. These approaches include, but are not limited to, behavioral, cognitive behavioral, cognitive, psychodynamic, existential, system/family, developmental (adult, child, family), humanistic or psycho-educational. Renewing Hope does not provide custody evaluation recommendations, medication or prescription recommendations or legal advice, as these activities do not fall within our scope of practice.

TREATMENT PLANS: Within a reasonable period of time after the initiation of treatment, your therapist will discuss with you their working understanding of the problem, treatment plan, therapeutic objectives, and view of the possible outcomes of treatment. If you have any unanswered questions about any of the procedures used in the course of your therapy, their possible risks, or about the treatment plan, please ask and you will be answered fully. You also have the right to ask about other treatments for your condition and their risks and benefits.

TERMINATION: As set forth above, within the first couple of sessions, it will be determined if we can be of benefit to you. Renewing Hope does not accept clients whose issues are out of the scope of practice of their therapist. We will give you a number of referrals whom you can contact. If at any point during psychotherapy, your therapist assesses that they are not effective in helping you reach the therapeutic goals or you are non-compliant, your therapist is obligated to discuss it with you and, if appropriate, to terminate treatment. In such a case, you will be given a number of referrals that may be of help to you. If you request it and authorize it in writing, your therapist will talk to the psychotherapist of your choice in order to help with the transition. If, at any time, you want another professional's opinion or wish to consult with another therapist, we will assist you with referrals, and, if we have your written consent, we will provide them with the essential information needed. You have the right to terminate therapy at any time. If you choose to do so, and if appropriate, we will offer to provide you with names of other qualified professionals.

DUAL RELATIONSHIPS: Despite a popular perception, not all dual or multiple relationships are unethical or avoidable. Therapy never involves sexual or any other dual relationship that impairs our therapist's objectivity, clinical judgment or can be exploitative in nature. We will assess carefully before entering into non-sexual and non-exploitative dual relationships with clients. It is important to realize that in some communities, particularly small towns, military bases, university campus, etc., multiple relationships are either unavoidable or expected. We will never acknowledge working with anyone without your written permission. Nevertheless, it will be discussed with you the often-existing complexities, potential benefits and difficulties that may be involved in dual or multiple relationships. Dual or multiple relationships can enhance trust and therapeutic effectiveness but can also detract from it and often it is impossible to know which ahead of time. It is your responsibility to advise your therapist if the dual or multiple relationships becomes uncomfortable for you in any way. We will always listen carefully and respond to your feedback and will discontinue the dual relationship if we find it interfering with the effectiveness of the therapy or your welfare and, of course, you can do the same at any time.

SOCIAL NETWORKING AND INTERNET SEARCHES: Our therapists do not accept friend requests from current or former clients on social networking sites, such as Facebook. We believe that adding clients as friends on these sites and/or communicating via such sites is likely to compromise their privacy and confidentiality. For this same reason, our therapists request that clients not communicate with us via any interactive or social networking web sites.

PAYMENTS & INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT: Renewing Hope will either submit claims directly to your insurance company or use a third-party billing company, on your behalf. The insurance company will process the claim and send an explanation of benefits to you and to Renewing Hope. The explanation of benefits will outline your financial responsibility such as; co-pay, co-insurance, or deductible. It is **YOUR** responsibility to check with your insurance company to verify benefits and coverage. Questions you may want to ask your insurance company include the amount of your co-pay, co-insurance, and the amount that will be applied to your deductible. You are expected to make your payment at time of service. Monthly payment plans are also available for those who need assistance. Please speak with your therapist if you need a monthly payment plan. If your account is overdue and there is no payment plan on file, Renewing Hope can use legal or other means (courts, collection agencies, etc.) to obtain payment. () initial

CANCELLATION: Since the scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, a minimum of 24 hours notice is required for canceling an appointment. Please contact your therapist immediately if you need to reschedule your appointment. If 24 hour notice is not given a \$50.00 charge may be applied to your account. This charge also applies to anyone who does not attend their scheduled session without notice. () initial

I have read the above Office Policies and General Information, Agreement for Psychotherapy Services and Informed Consent for Psychotherapy carefully; I understand them and agree to comply with them:

Client's Name (print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Relationship to Client _____

Signature of Therapist _____ Date _____