

# Informed Consent for Psychotherapy

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**Chelsea McGowan, LCSW**

It's not easy to take the first step toward wellness, and I'm glad you've chosen to move forward with seeking therapy services through my practice. This informed consent for psychotherapy provides you the information you need to make an informed decision regarding your consent to participate in services. Please read the following consent and indicate your agreement by completing the signature page.

### **The Therapist**

The therapist, Chelsea McGowan, is a licensed clinical social worker specializing in individual counseling with adults, with special expertise in parenting issues, adoption/foster care, anxiety, depression, and stress management. The therapist will review your reasons for seeking psychotherapy and identify whether the therapist is capable of addressing your concern.

Chelsea McGowan holds a Master of Social Welfare degree from University of California, Berkeley and is fully licensed through the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, LCSW License Number 91119.

Please note that you may withdraw from the psychotherapy at any time, with notice given to the therapist.

### **Session Length and Pricing (*Does Not Apply to BetterHelp Clients*)**

There is no specific determination on how many sessions are needed by a client as this may depend on the treatment plan progress of said client and this can be discussed with your therapist. A session length of 50 minutes is standard.

Standard Pricing: \$150 per 50 minute session, \$200 per 80 minute session.

This practice provides a no-fee 30 minute individual consultation for new clients.

Any additional service provision will be billed at \$150 per 50 minutes, at the discretion of the therapist, with advance notice to the client. This can include requested participation in group meetings, requested written statements, compiling records following a client's written request, etc. This rate applies to both standard and scholarship program agreements.

Crisis support/contact will *not* be billed unless the contacts exceed 50 minutes in a week. If a crisis requires ongoing support, the therapist will ask the client to schedule an additional therapy session within the week to address the crisis.

Logistical contact will *not* be billed, such as brief email or telephone conversations regarding scheduling or billing.

### **Insurance**

The therapist is not a contracted provider with any insurance company or managed care organization. Should the client choose to use their insurance, the therapist will provide client with a statement, which the client can submit to the third-party of their choice to seek reimbursement of fees already paid.

The client should note, however, that while therapy is often reimbursable by Health Spending Accounts, that many have specific guidelines regarding reimbursement. Clients should check with their insurance carrier or HSA provider in order to ascertain whether services are, in fact, reimbursable.

### **Scholarship Program (*Does Not Apply to BetterHelp Clients*)**

This practice holds strong values regarding serving all members of our community, not just those of financial means. Therefore, a scholarship program was implemented to support services to a limited number of clients experiencing financial need or hardship that would otherwise prevent them from accessing the services of this practice.

Scholarship Program applications are taken individually during the no-fee 30 minute consultation, or at any time during treatment if a client experiences new financial need or hardship.

Scholarships are renewed every 60 days depending on continued financial need and availability of scholarship spaces. The scholarship program has capacity for five (5) clients, subject to the discretion of the therapist.

Scholarship Program Pricing: \$50 per 50 minute session.

### **Risks**

Through therapy, clients may engage in self-reflection and introspection that bring strong emotions to the surface. Therapeutic progress will be tracked using therapeutic goals created jointly between the therapist and the client, and do not guarantee outcomes. Any questions or concerns regarding therapeutic progress should be addressed with the therapist during sessions.

There may be a chance that during or after a session the client may feel emotionally distressed. The client is urged to discuss their feelings and process emotions with their therapist to reduce any emotional distress or harm.

Crisis consultation is available to clients of this practice who are experiencing distress, and can usually be provided within 48 hours. Immediate or same-day availability is not guaranteed, and clients are required to contact emergency services if they are experiencing suicidal thoughts or engaging in suicidal actions. If you are in imminent danger, you agree to call 911 or your local crisis response.

### **Advantages**

Therapy helps precipitate change and emotional healing. Supporting these insights leads to new ways of coping and addressing problems, and provide clarity in future decision making.

I understand that therapy can be challenging. Together with the therapist, goals will be identified by the client and progress on those goals will be monitored by the therapist and reviewed regularly with the client. The goal of therapy is to progress in the mutually agreed upon goals, though outcomes are

not guaranteed.

## **Relationship**

Any relationship that a client has with their therapist is strictly professional. Other relationships, such as business or personal relationships, that a client may have with a therapist can prevent or undermine the effectiveness of the treatment.

The therapist will not accept friend request or connection requests on social media, nor will the therapist seek out information about the clients or their families through any online platforms or private/professional networks.

Dual relationships or outside contact may occur, and will be addressed professionally on a case by case basis. Clients are welcome to acknowledge the therapist in social situations as they occur, but the therapist will never approach the client in public unsolicited. For foster/adoptive parents and former foster youth - California foster care and adoptions is a small world and we may cross paths, but how we walk through them together is always up to the client.

Professional reviews of the services provided are welcome and encouraged.

## **Confidentiality and Record Keeping**

Sessions between the therapist and the client are strictly confidential. Any notes taken by the therapist during therapy shall be kept confidential and secure by the therapist at all times and the therapist shall not disclose case details or documentation to anyone without any prior written consent by the client. Limitations of such client held privilege of confidentiality exist and are itemized below:

1. If a client threatens or attempts to commit suicide or otherwise conducts him/her self in a manner in which there is a substantial risk of incurring serious bodily harm.
2. If a client threatens grave bodily harm or death to another person.
3. If the therapist has a reasonable suspicion that a client or other named victim is the perpetrator, observer of, or actual victim of physical, emotional or sexual abuse of children under the age of 18 years.
4. Suspicions as stated above in the case of an elderly person who may be subjected to these abuses.
5. Suspected neglect of the parties named in items #3 and # 4.
6. If a court of law issues a legitimate subpoena for information stated on the subpoena.
7. If a client is in therapy or being treated by order of a court of law, or if information is obtained for the purpose of rendering an expert's report to an attorney.

Notes created during therapy constitute the therapist's clinical and business records, which by law, the therapist is required to maintain. Such records are the sole property of the therapist. The therapist will not alter their normal record keeping process at the request of any client. Should the client request a copy of the therapist's records, such a request must be made in writing.

The therapist reserves the right, under law, to provide the client with a treatment summary in lieu of actual records. Therapist also reserves the right to refuse to produce a copy of the record under certain circumstances, but may, if and as requested, provide a copy of the record to another treating health care provider.

Therapist will maintain the client's records for ten years following termination of therapy. However, after ten years, the client's records will be destroyed in a manner that preserves the client's confidentiality.

Please discuss any questions you have regarding confidentiality or record keeping with the therapist.

### **Professional Consultation**

Professional consultation is an important component of a healthy psychotherapy practice. As such, the therapist regularly participates in clinical, ethical, and legal consultation with appropriate professionals.

During such consultations, the therapist will not reveal any personally identifying information regarding the client.

### **Joint/Co-Parenting Counseling**

Each person in the joint session is expected to be honest and direct. The clients are expected to follow the guidelines in this therapy agreement. Provision of services to multiple participants is limited to the scope of experience of the therapist, in order to support a the joint relationship and individual mental health as it relates to foster care, adoption, and co-parenting.

**"NO SECRETS" POLICY FOR JOINT THERAPY:** Generally speaking, in the joint-therapy setting, the therapist cannot be the holder of a secret. Thus, if you feel it necessary to talk about matters that you absolutely do not want shared with the other party in the joint session, you might want to also consult with an individual therapist who can assist you to process the meaning and importance of the secret. If there is information that an individual desires to address within a context of individual confidentiality, the therapist will be happy to provide referrals to therapists who can provide concurrent individual therapy.

The therapist may determine that it is necessary to discontinue the counseling relationship with the couple if the needs of the couple exceed the scope of the therapist's practice, or if the couple requires more intensive relationship support outside of the boundaries of foster parenting, adoption, or co-parenting.

### **Court Proceedings**

The therapist will not voluntarily participate in any litigation, or custody dispute, in which the client and another individual, or entity, or parties, is engaged. The therapist has a policy of not communicating with clients' attorney(s) and will generally not write or sign letters, reports, declarations, or affidavits to be used in clients' legal matters.

The therapist will generally not provide records or testimony unless compelled to do so. Any court order regarding the release of records or testimony will be reviewed by the therapist's legal counsel before response.

If the therapist received a request for records, deposition testimony, or testimony in a court of law, the therapist will assert the Psychotherapist-Client privilege on the client's behalf until instructed, in writing, to do otherwise by the client or the client's representative. The client should be aware that they might be waiving the Psychotherapist-Client privilege if they makes his/her mental or emotional state an issue in a legal proceeding. The client should address any concerns they might have regarding the Psychotherapist-Client privilege with their attorney

Should the therapist be subpoenaed, or ordered by a court of law, to appear as a witness in an action involving the client, the client agrees to reimburse the therapist for any time spent for preparation, travel, or other time in which the therapist has made themselves available for such an appearance at the therapist's usual and customary session rate of \$150for a 50-minute session.

### **Termination**

The therapist reserves the right to terminate therapy at their discretion. Reasons for termination include, but are not limited to, untimely payment of fees, failure to comply with treatment recommendations, conflicts of interest, failure to participate in therapy, the client needs are outside of the therapist's scope of competence or practice, or the client is not making adequate progress in therapy. The client has the right to terminate therapy at their discretion.

Should you fail to schedule an appointment for three consecutive weeks, unless other arrangements have been made in advance, for legal and ethical reasons, the therapist must consider the professional relationship discontinued and the client will be considered inactive, and the therapist will no longer consider the client to be under their active treatment.

Upon either party's decision to terminate therapy, the therapist 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. As appropriate, the therapist will also attempt to ensure a smooth transition to another therapist by offering referrals to the client.

### **Questions**

For questions or concerns:

Chelsea McGowan, LCSW

(510) 859-8130

Chelsea@Foster-Therapy.com

BY CLICKING ON THE CHECKBOX BELOW I AM AGREEING THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREE TO THE ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.

