

**Elizabeth Bias, Psy.D.
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(925) 577-0229

PSYCHOTHERAPIST-CLIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT AND OFFICE POLICIES

Welcome to my practice. This document (the Agreement) contains important information about my professional services and business policies that is additional to that detailed in the Notice of Privacy Practices. It also contains summary information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), a new federal law that provides new privacy protections and new client rights with regard to the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) used for the purpose of treatment, payment, and health care operations. HIPAA requires that I provide you with a Notice of Privacy Practices (the Notice) for use and disclosure of PHI for treatment, payment and health care operations. The Notice, which is attached to this Agreement, explains HIPAA and its application to your personal health information in greater detail. The law requires that I obtain your signature acknowledging that I have provided you with this information at the end of this session. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you read them carefully before our next session. We can discuss any questions you have about the procedures at that time. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. You may revoke this Agreement in writing at any time. That revocation will be binding on me unless I have taken action in reliance on it; if there are obligations imposed on me by your health insurer in order to process or substantiate claims made under your policy; or if you have not satisfied any financial obligations you have incurred.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and client, and the particular problems you are experiencing. There are many different methods I may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very 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. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. Other people in your life may not be happy with the changes you decide to make, which can cause problems in relationships. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have many benefits. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. However, there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. 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 my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion or to help you find someone that fits your needs better.

MEETINGS

A therapy session lasts 50 minutes. Within a reasonable period of time after the initiation of treatment, I

will discuss with you my 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, my expertise in employing them, or about the treatment plan, please bring this up with me.

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. It is important to note that insurance companies do not provide reimbursement for canceled sessions.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

My session fee is \$200. In addition to weekly appointments, I charge this amount for other professional services you may need, though I will break down the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 15 minutes, consulting with other professionals with your permission, preparation of records or treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other service you may request of me. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for all of my professional time, including preparation and transportation costs, even if I am called to testify by another party. [Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge \$350 per hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding.]

CONTACTING ME

The best way to reach me is on my mobile phone at 925-577-0229. This voice mail is checked several times every 24 hours with the exception of weekends and holidays. You can typically expect a return telephone call within 24 hours. In the event of a life-threatening situation you are advised to call 911 immediately. When I am on vacation, I will make arrangements for another licensed mental health professional to be available if needed, and will provide you with the appropriate contact information.

LIMITS ON CONFIDENTIALITY

The law protects the privacy of all communication between a client and a psychologist. In most situations, I can only release information about your treatment to others if you sign a written authorization form that meets certain legal requirements imposed by HIPAA. There are other situations that require only that you provide written, advance consent. Your signature on this Agreement provides consent for those activities, as follows:

1. I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other health and mental health professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my client. The other professionals are also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I feel that it is important to our work together. I will note all consultations in your Clinical Record.

2. Disclosures required by health insurers or to collect overdue fees are discussed elsewhere in this Agreement.

There are some situations where I am permitted or required to disclose information without either your consent or Authorization:

1. If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning your diagnosis and treatment, such information is protected by the psychologist-client privilege law. I cannot provide any information without your (or your legal representative's) written authorization, or a court order. If you are involved in or contemplating litigation, you should consult with your attorney to determine whether a court would be likely to order me to disclose information.

2. If a government agency is requesting the information for health oversight activities, I may be required to provide it for them.
3. If a client files a complaint or lawsuit against me, I may disclose relevant information regarding that client, in order to defend myself.
4. If a client files a worker's compensation claim, I must, upon appropriate request, provide appropriate information, including a copy of the client's record, to the client's employer, the insurer, or the Department of Worker's Compensation.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take actions, which I believe are necessary to attempt to protect others from harm and I may have to reveal some information about a client's treatment. These situations are unusual in my practice.

1. If I have reasonable cause to believe that a child under age 18 is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon him or her which causes harm or substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare (including sexual abuse), or from neglect (including malnutrition), the law requires that I file a report with the Department of Social Services. Once such a report is filed, I may be required to provide additional information.
2. If I have reason to believe an elderly or disabled individual is suffering from abuse, the law requires that I report to the Department of Elder Affairs. Once such a report is filed, I may be required to provide additional information.
3. If a client communicates an immediate threat of serious physical harm to an identifiable victim or if a client has a history of violence and the apparent intent and ability to carry out the threat, I may be required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, and/or seeking hospitalization for the client.
4. If a client threatens to harm himself/herself, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her, or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

If such a situation arises, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action and I will limit my disclosure to what is necessary.

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 now or in the future. The laws governing confidentiality can be quite complex, and I am not an attorney. In situations where specific advice is required, formal legal advice may be needed.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep Protected Health Information about you in your Clinical Record. Your record includes such information as the issue which brought you to treatment, history related to your treatment, a treatment plan, notes including the date and length of sessions and your progress, and copies of your authorizations for treatment and for disclosure of PHI. It will also contain billing information, demographic information and may contain letters or reports that I request from others involved in your care. You may examine and/or receive a copy of your records if you request it in writing, unless I believe that access would endanger you. In those situations, you have a right to a summary and to have your record

sent to another mental health provider or your attorney. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, I recommend that you initially review them in my presence. I am sometimes willing to conduct this review meeting without charge. In

most situations, I am allowed to charge a copying fee of .25 per page, and for certain other purposes. If I refuse your request for access to your records, you have a right of review, which I will discuss with you upon your request.

CLIENT RIGHTS

HIPAA provides you with several new or expanded rights with regard to your Clinical Record and disclosures of protected health information. These rights include requesting that I amend your record; requesting restrictions on what information from your Clinical Record is disclosed to others; requesting an accounting of most disclosures of protected health information that you have neither consented to nor authorized; determining the location to which protected information disclosures are sent; having any complaints you make about my policies and procedures recorded in your records; and the right to a paper copy of this Agreement, the attached Notice form, and my privacy policies and procedures. I am happy to discuss any of these rights with you.

MINORS & PARENTS

Clients under 18 years of age who are not emancipated and their parents should be aware that the law allows parents to examine their child's treatment records, unless I believe this review would be harmful to the client and his/her treatment. Because privacy in psychotherapy is often crucial to successful progress, particularly with teenagers, it is sometimes my policy to request an agreement from parents that they consent to give up their access to their child's records. If they agree, during treatment, I will provide them only with general information about the progress of the child's treatment, and his/her attendance at scheduled sessions. I will also provide parents with a summary of their child's treatment when it is complete. Any other communication will require the child's authorization, unless I feel that the child is in danger or is a danger to someone else, in which case, I will notify the parents of my concern. Before giving parents any information, I will discuss the matter with the child, if possible, and do my best to handle any objections he/she may have.

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage that requires another arrangement. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. [In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan.]

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

INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. I will fill out forms and provide you with whatever assistance I can in helping you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; however, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of my fees. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers.

You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services. If you have questions about the coverage, call your plan administrator. Of course, I will provide you with whatever information I can based on my experience and will be happy to

help you in understanding the information you receive from your insurance company. If it is necessary to clear confusion, I will be willing to call the company on your behalf.

You should also be aware that your contract with your health insurance company requires that I provide it with information relevant to the services that I provide to you. I will make every effort to release only the minimum information about you that is necessary for the purpose requested. This information will become part of the insurance company files and will probably be stored in a computer. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, I 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. I will provide you with a copy of any report I submit, if you request it. By signing this Agreement, you agree that I can provide requested information to your carrier.

Once we have all of the information about your insurance coverage, we will discuss what we can expect to accomplish with the benefits that are available and what will happen if they run out before you feel ready to end your sessions. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself to avoid the problems described above.

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I have read the above Agreement and Office Policies carefully; I understand them and agree to comply with them.

Client name (print)

Signature Date

Psychologist: Elizabeth Bias, Psy.D. PSY16873 Tel: (925) 577-0229

Signature Date

Notice: The Department of Consumer Affairs receives questions and complaints regarding the practice of psychology. If you have any questions or complaints, you may contact this department by calling (916) 263-2699 or by writing to the following address:

Board of Psychology
1625 N. Market Blvd #N-215, Sacramento, CA 95834