

# **Client-Therapist Contract**

## **Matt Case, LPC**

### **Outpatient Services Contract**

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

### **Psychological Services**

Any kind of psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves coming into contact with unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to lead to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. What you get out of therapy is based partly on what you put into it, your willingness to go to those places that are difficult. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience or get out of it.

My in-office approach with individuals draws upon two schools of therapy: (1) traditional talk-therapy, or supportive counseling, which relies upon a safe therapeutic relationship, active listening and encouragement to help clients progress towards their stated goals, and; (2) Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, an evidenced-based modality that uses mindfulness and acceptance skills to learn how to live with difficult feelings (instead of fighting them) in pursuit of creating a life of meaning. My work with parents is a combination of the Love & Logic model and my own experience as a parent and therapist that emphasizes parent self-care, self-awareness, role modeling, and relationship-building. My work with relationships (usually co-parenting and parent-child) flows from my training as a community and divorce mediator, and my own experiences.

The other treatment approach I offer is equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP), which is an emerging field that uses horse-human interactive experiences to facilitate emotional growth and learning. It is a collaborative effort between a licensed therapist and a horse professional working with the clients and horses to address treatment goals. Participants learn about themselves and others by participating in activities with the horses, and then processing (or discussing) feelings, behaviors, and patterns. The focus of EAP is not riding or horsemanship. In fact, 100 percent of EAP takes place purely on the ground. I recommend using equine assisted psychotherapy as an adjunct with traditional in-office therapy, and we will provide your in-office therapist with regular updates.

For this work, I contract with ClearWind Farm, LLC for use of the horse facility, horses and the services of an equine specialist, Suzanne Case.

Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist and therapeutic modality 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.

### **Sessions**

Sessions run for 53 to 60 minutes. Once an appointment 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 a session is to include another person (family member, for example), we will have a clear agenda, and I will check in with you one-on-one first, before inviting the other person in.

## **Professional Fees, Billing and Payments**

My hourly fee for in-office therapy is \$120; equine assisted psychotherapy is \$160. I do offer a sliding fee scale for people on moderate incomes. Additional services – talking to teachers, consulting with physicians, writing reports – are billed at the same rate, and will be agreed upon before services are rendered. You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan. I accept cash, checks and credit cards, and I will charge a \$20 service fee for returned checks.

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 payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, our legal costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information I release regarding a client's treatment is his/her name, the nature of the services provided, and the amount due.

## **Insurance Reimbursement**

Please ask about what insurance companies I can currently authorize to bill on your behalf. If I do not accept your insurance, I can provide a receipt of services that you can use to file with your insurance company for out-of-network benefits, if your plan includes that benefit.

## **Contacting Me**

You can reach me on my cell phone, 336-775-7881, or email ([mcaselpc@gmail.com](mailto:mcaselpc@gmail.com)) regarding any matter. I check messages regularly and will get back to you just as soon as I am able. Be sure to leave your phone number when you call. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you can't wait for a return call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the mental health clinician on call. If I am unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name and number of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

## **Professional Records**

You should be aware that, pursuant to HIPAA, I may keep Protected Health Information about you in two sets of professional records. One set constitutes your Clinical Record. It includes information about your reasons for seeking therapy, a description of the ways in which your problem impacts your life, your diagnosis, the goals that are set for treatment, your progress towards those goals, your medical and social history, your treatment history, any past treatment, reports of any professional consultations, your billing records, and any reports that have been sent to anyone, including reports to your insurance carrier. You have a legal right to see your clinical record upon request. The second, set ("psychotherapy notes") may include more personal details that you have shared in our conversations, and those notes receive additional protections under HIPAA; I do not share these notes with your insurance provider or others. These notes are so protected that even you do not have a legal right to see them (I would be happy to talk about this further if you would like).

## **Confidentiality**

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

- A judge can order my testimony in a court proceeding.
- If I believe a child or elder is being abused, I am obligated by law to report it to the appropriate state agency.

- If a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required to take protective action.
- If a client threatens to harm himself or herself, I am obligated to contact family, friends, the police or the hospital to ensure the client's safety.

### **Confidentiality Issues With Minors**

When parents bring in their child for treatment, they are understandably curious about their child's progress and parental involvement is often crucial to successful treatment. Parents have the right to request and receive information about their child's mental condition, diagnosis, treatment needs and services provided.

It is my belief, however, that young people need to develop trust in their counselor and need some degree of privacy. I ask parents to respect this privacy and refrain from asking me about the details of their child's/children's treatment. If parents request it, I will provide general information about how treatment is proceeding. I will inform parents as soon as possible if I believe there is a high risk that their child will seriously harm herself/himself or someone else. Before giving parents any information, I will attempt to discuss it, if possible, with the child and I will do my best to handle any objections she/he may have.

### **Patient Rights**

HIPPA provides you with several new or expanded rights with regard to your clinical records and disclosures of protected health information. These rights include requesting that your provider amend your records; requesting restrictions on what information from your Clinical Records 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 review and copy your records. I will be happy to discuss any of these rights with you. These rights are explained further in the Privacy Notice.

### **Complaints**

If you have a complaint about my services to you or your child, I encourage you to speak honestly with me about it first. If you still feel I have acted unprofessionally, unethically or illegally, I encourage you to contact the NC Board of Licensed Professional Counselors, the agency which awarded me my counselor's license (#4828). You can reach them at (919) 661-0820, PO Box 1369, Garner, NC 27529, or on the web at [www.ncblpc.org](http://www.ncblpc.org). If you have a grievance related to equine assisted psychotherapy, you can also contact the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association, the outfit that trained me in equine assisted psychotherapy, at (877) 858-4600 or on the web at [www.eagala.org](http://www.eagala.org).

Acceptance of the terms of this contract will be indicated by your signature on the Signature Page form.

I look forward to working with you,

Matt Case, LPC