

# Quest Counseling LLC

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## **COUNSELOR-CLIENT SERVICE AGREEMENT /INFORMED CONSENT FOR TREATMENT**

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. It also contains summary information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), a federal law that provides privacy protections and client rights about the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) for the purposes of treatment, payment, and health care operations. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you understand them. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. We can discuss any questions you have when you sign them or at any time in the future.

### **COUNSELING SERVICES**

Counseling is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in counseling, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. There are also legal limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. As your counselor I have corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

Counseling has both benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness, because the process of counseling often requires discussing the unpleasant aspects of your life. However, counseling has been shown to have benefits for individuals who undertake it. Counseling often leads to a significant reduction in feelings of distress, increased satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, greater personal awareness and insight, increased skills for managing stress and resolutions to specific problems. But, there are no guarantees about what will happen. Counseling requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work on things we discuss outside of sessions.

The first session will involve a comprehensive evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what our work might include. At that point, we will discuss your treatment goals and create an initial treatment plan. You should evaluate this information and make your own assessment about whether you feel comfortable working with me. 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.

### **APPOINTMENTS**

Appointments will ordinarily be 45-50 minutes in duration, once per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be more or less frequent as needed.. If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I ask that you provide me with 24 hours notice. If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel with less than 24 hour notice, you will be responsible for a \$30.00 no show fee. If it is possible, I will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment. In addition, you are responsible for coming to your session on time; if you are late, your appointment will still need to end on time.

### **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

The standard fee for the initial intake is \$110.00 and each subsequent session is \$90.00. You are responsible for paying at the time of your session unless prior arrangements have been made. Payment can be made by cash, debit or credit card. If you refuse to pay your debt, I reserve the right to use an attorney or collection agency to secure payment.

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In addition to weekly appointments, it is my practice to charge this amount on a prorated basis (I will break down the hourly cost) for other professional services that you may require such as report writing, telephone conversations that last longer than 15 minutes, attendance at meetings or consultations which you have requested, or the time required to perform any other service which you may request of me. If you anticipate becoming involved in a court case, I recommend that we discuss this fully before you waive your right to confidentiality. If your case requires my participation, you will be expected to pay for the professional time required even if another party compels me to testify.

## INSURANCE

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. You are responsible for knowing your coverage and for letting me know if/when your coverage changes.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize me to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. (Diagnoses are technical terms that describe the nature of your problems and whether they are short-term or long-term problems. All diagnoses come from a book entitled the DSM-IV. There is a copy in my office and I will be glad to let you see it to learn more about your diagnosis, if applicable.). Sometimes I have to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of the entire record (in rare cases). 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 if you plan to pay with insurance.

In addition, if you plan to use your insurance, authorization from the insurance company may be required before they will cover therapy fees. If you did not obtain authorization and it is required, you may be responsible for full payment of the fee. Co-payments are to be paid at the time of the visit by cash, debit or credit card. In addition, some insurance companies also have a deductible, which is an out-of-pocket amount that must be paid by the client before the insurance companies are willing to begin paying any amount for services. This will typically mean that you will be responsible to pay for initial sessions with me until your deductible has been met; the deductible amount may also need to be met at the start of each calendar year. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself to avoid the problems described above.

If I am not a participating provider for your insurance plan, I will supply you with a receipt of payment for services, which you can submit to your insurance company for reimbursement. Please note that not all insurance companies reimburse for out-of-network providers. If you prefer to use a participating provider, I will refer you to a colleague.

## PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

I am required to keep appropriate records of the counseling services that I provide. Your records are maintained in a secure location in the office. I keep brief records noting that you were here, your reasons for seeking counseling, the goals and progress we set for treatment, your diagnosis, topics we discussed, your medical, social, and treatment history, records I receive from other providers, copies of records I send to others, and your billing records. Any written communication from you to me will also become

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part of your records, including emails. Except in unusual circumstances that involve danger to yourself, you have the right to a copy of your records. I recommend that you initially review them with me, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional to discuss the contents. You also have the right to request that a copy of your records be made available to any other health care provider at your written request.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

My policies about confidentiality, as well as other information about your privacy rights, are fully described in a separate document entitled Notice of Privacy Practices. You have been provided with a copy of that document and we have discussed those issues. Please remember that you may reopen the conversation at any time during our work together.

## PARENTS & MINORS

While privacy in counseling is crucial to successful progress, parental involvement can also be essential. It is my policy not to provide treatment to a child under age 13 unless s/he agrees that I can share whatever information I consider necessary with a parent. For children 14 and older, I request an agreement between the client and the parents allowing me to share general information about treatment progress and attendance, as well as a treatment summary upon completion of counseling. All other communication will require the child's agreement, unless I feel there is a safety concern, in which case I will make every effort to notify the child of my intention to disclose information ahead of time and make every effort to handle any objections that are raised.

## CONTACTING ME

I am often not immediately available by telephone. I do not answer my phone when I am with clients or otherwise unavailable. At these times, you may leave a message and your call will be returned as soon as possible. I will agree to text messages only for administrative purposes such as scheduling and reminders. You may email me, but know that I will not check my email more than once a day and will not guarantee a response to an email. I will not share texts and emails but these forms of communications are not guaranteed to be confidential. I will not contact nor will I respond to communication through social media such as Facebook. I will make every attempt to inform you in advance of planned absences, and provide you with the name and phone number of a mental health professional covering my practice. In the event of an emergency call 911.

## OTHER RIGHTS

If you are unhappy with what is happening in counseling, I hope you will talk with me so that I can respond to your concerns. Such comments will be taken seriously and handled with care and respect. You may also request that I refer you to another therapist and are free to end counseling at any time. You have the right to considerate, safe and respectful care, without discrimination as to race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, or source of payment. You have the right to ask questions about any aspects of counseling and about my specific training and experience. You have the right to expect that I will not have social or sexual relationships with clients or with former clients.

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CONSENT FOR COUNSELING:

Your signature below indicates that you have read this Agreement and the Notice of Privacy Practices and agree to their terms.

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Signature of Client or Personal Representative Date

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Printed Name of Client or Personal Representative Date

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Description of Representative's Authority

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