

SLOAT CONSULTING



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“Free to Be”

OUTPATIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT

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 we can discuss them at our next meeting. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Therapy/Counseling

It is hard to describe psychotherapy in a few sentences. Psychotherapy is a confidential process of self-examination focused on increasing awareness of emotions, attitudes, and behavior. The way it plays out varies with the therapist’s personal style and the particular problem you bring to the session. I use various methods to help you figure things out. Therapy calls for very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to honestly discuss your concerns during our sessions and work on your issues after you leave the office.

Benefits/Risks

Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific life problems, and more pleasant feelings instead of painful ones. Sometimes individuals feel worse before they feel better because therapy often requires recalling and talking about past hurts. You may feel various uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness, guilt, shame, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. Those close to you may complain about your changes if your new behavior affects them. Because psychotherapy is complicated, there are no guaranteed outcomes.

Getting Started

Our first several sessions will involve an evaluation of your life and the problems you would like to solve. I will give you my impression of your situation and the steps we can take to meet your goals. You need to evaluate this information and decide if you

are comfortable working with me. Therapy involves a commitment of time, money, and energy, so you need to choose a therapist who is a “good fit” with you. If you have any questions about my approach, please say so, and we will discuss your concerns. If for any reason you are consistently uncomfortable in our sessions, I will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another psychologist for a second opinion. My goal is to find the help you need.

Sessions

Sessions are 45-50 minutes, and we usually meet weekly. I will try to accommodate your schedule if possible. No-shows or cancellations within 24 hours of the appointment will be charged to your account. Except in situations or events beyond your control such as illness, car trouble on the road, icy road conditions, etc. For reasonable appointment changes, please call and I will try to reschedule for the same week.

Professional Fees

My normal session fee is \$110.00 unless I have an agreement with your insurance company for a discount. The hourly rate is prorated to other services you may need such as written reports, psychological testing, telephone conversations over 10 minutes, attendance at meetings on your behalf, preparation of records or treatment summaries for other agencies, disability insurance, etc., or any other service you may authorize. Most of these extra services are not covered by insurance. There is no charge for normal record keeping during ongoing therapy.

If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for my time even if the opposing side compels me to testify. Because legal involvement is difficult and complex, my hourly fee for preparing and attending legal proceedings is \$140.00.

Billing and Payments

Since I handle all billing myself, you will pay me, not Joan at the waiting room window. Credit card payment is available through PayPal on the Internet. Go to www.Sloatconsulting.com and click on the payment link.

Your co-pay is due at each session. I can help with insurance billing, but ultimately, you are responsible for all charges. If you do not show for an appointment or cancel in less than 24 hours, you will be billed for the full session amount.

If you have a time payment plan, you may not have a balance over \$300.00. Statements will be issued monthly, documenting all charges to you and your payments. All accounts are due within 15 days of the billing date.

If your account is past due and you ignore reminders to pay, your credit file will receive a notice and you may face formal collection procedures. Collection fees will be added to your account

Insurance Information

1) The amount your insurance pays determines how many sessions you can use to work on your problems unless you plan to pay for the sessions after the insurance runs out. For example, some managed care companies offer a "crisis intervention" benefit (6-10 visits) regardless of the total visits the policy states are available in a calendar year. If your carrier has a brief therapy model, we need to talk about it up front so we can set realistic treatment goals. If you need more sessions than you insurance provides, you may 1) ask to transfer to an publicly supported agency 2) continue sessions with me at my regular (non-discounted) rate.

2) Many managed care companies require "pre-certification." Check your insurance card to learn if pre-certification is required for outpatient therapy. If it is, call the phone number on the card and explain why you want therapy. They will approve your request and give you 5-10 visits. If you start therapy and do not call them, most carriers will pay nothing or will pay a reduced rate per session.

3) Most managed care companies require you to see a therapist who is on their panel. You may see a therapist who is not on the approved list, but the insurance will either not pay for it or pay a lower amount.

4) Most managed care companies require the provider to submit the session claim. You will be responsible only for your co-pay at each session. Some companies also have special forms for you to sign.

5) Your insurance carrier may decide not to pay the charges for several reasons: 1) You have not met your deductible; 2) The service is not a "covered service." 3) The carrier may deem the service covered, but not "medically necessary" in this specific situation. If your insurance carrier does not pay for the sessions, you will be liable for the full charge on a private pay basis.

Insurance Companies and Your Personal Information

In order for your insurance company to pay, you must give me permission to send them information about you. This includes a clinical diagnosis, your name, your employer, your birthday, your social security number, etc. (this is the minimum). Some managed care companies want to know details about your problems so they can decide if you really need therapy visits. They also want to know your symptoms and the treatment plan. In rare cases they may want a copy of the entire record.

Some companies want to know if you have had psychiatric (mental) problems, drinking problems, legal problems, etc., in your family. Under the new HIPPA privacy rules, they have no access to the things we discuss in sessions, but they can require information from your medical record which includes your social history, diagnoses, medications used, test results, appointments kept, progress, symptoms, etc. All insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, but once I send it to them, I have no control over what they do with it. In some cases they may share the information with a national medical information data bank. If you want, I will show you a copy of any report I send them. Also, remember that you always have the right to pay for my services and avoid the managed care complications.

Contacting Me

Normal office hours are Monday through Thursday. If I am in session, an answering machine will take messages, but I always try to return calls the same day I receive them. (I cannot guarantee the same for weekends and holidays.) If you will be difficult to reach, leave several numbers or times when you will be available and how late I can call you. I will not call after 10:00 PM unless you request it. E-mail address is Drsloat@ameritech.net. I am unable to provide frequent, ongoing support through e-mail, however.

The for sure way to reach me, especially after office hours, is to call my cell phone. In the event of a physical emergency, call 911. The **Grand Rapids 24-hour Helpline** is (616) 336-3535. It is available if all else fails. If I am on vacation or out of town, I will give you the name of someone to call.

Professional Records

Michigan law and my profession's standards require that I keep records of my sessions with you. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to persons untrained in psychology. If you wish to see your records, I recommend that you review them with me so we can discuss the contents and I can answer any questions you may have. For a lengthy discussion, a prorated charge will be added to your account.

Insurance companies require basic personal information so they can process your claims and pay a portion of your costs. So your record is not 100% private in the insurance system.

Limits on Confidentiality

The law protects the privacy of all communications between a patient 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:

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 patient. 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 (which is called "PHI" in my Notice of Psychologist's Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information).

You should be aware that other therapists work in this office, and Joan often helps with scheduling, answering phone, etc. In some cases, I need to share protected information with Joan and/or other therapists for both clinical and administrative purposes, such as scheduling, billing, consultation, or call coverage. All of the mental health professionals are bound by the same rules of confidentiality. All staff members

have been given training about protecting your privacy and have agreed not to release any unauthorized information.

I also have contracts with E-Claims, a company that handles your insurance claims electronically, and Cragwall & Associates, P.C. which provides office space and phone service. As required by HIPAA, I have a formal business associate contract with these businesses in which they promise to maintain the confidentiality of this data except as specifically allowed in the contract or otherwise required by law. If you wish, I can provide you with the names of these organizations and/or a blank copy of this contract.

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

*If a patient threatens to harm himself/herself, I may be obligated to arrange hospitalization for him/her, or to contact family members who can provide protection.

* If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning your diagnosis and treatment, such information may not be protected by the psychologist-patient privilege law. Normally, I cannot provide any information without your written authorization, but a court order can force me to provide the requested information. If you are involved in or contemplating litigation, you should ask your attorney if the court might order me to disclose information.

* If a government agency is requesting the information for health oversight activities, I may be required to provide it for them.

*If a patient files a complaint or lawsuit against me, I may disclose relevant information regarding that patient in order to defend myself.

*If I am being compensated for providing treatment to you as a result of your having filed a worker's compensation claim, I must, upon appropriate request, provide information necessary for utilization review purposes.

*If I have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, the law requires that I file a report with the Family Independence Agency. Once such a report is filed, I may be required to provide additional information.

* If I have reasonable cause to suspect the "criminal abuse" of an adult patient, I must report it to the police. Once such a report is filed, I may be required to provide additional information.

* If a patient communicates a threat of physical violence against a reasonably identifiable third person and the patient has the apparent intent and ability to carry out that threat in the foreseeable future, I may have to disclose information in order to take protective action. These actions may include notifying the potential victim (or, if the victim is a minor, his/her parents and the county Department of Social Services) and contacting the police, and/or seeking hospitalization for the patient.

Confidentiality issues are complex, so please ask for clarification whenever you have questions.

Patient Rights

HIPAA 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 I amend your record; 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 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

Patients under 18 years of age who are not emancipated and their parents should be aware that the law may allow parents to examine their child's treatment records. They should also be aware that patients over 14 can consent to (and control access to information about) their own treatment, although that treatment cannot extend beyond 12 sessions or 4 months. While privacy in psychotherapy is very important, particularly with teenagers, parental involvement is also essential to successful treatment. Therefore, it is usually my policy to request an agreement from any patient between 14 and 18 and his/her parents allowing me to share general information with parents about the progress of treatment and the child's 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 teen's authorization, unless I feel that the teen is in danger or is a danger to someone else, in which case, I will notify the parents of my concern. If there is something I believe they need to know, (other than emergency situations), I will talk it over with the teen and decide what to do.

Office Arrangement

Although the office phone is answered "Cragwall & Associates," the individuals in this office are independently practicing professionals who rent space and purchase services from Cragwall & Associates, P.C. I am fully responsible in providing you with clinical services. My professional records are maintained separately and no member of the group may have access to them without your specific written permission.

Agreement

I have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship. I agree to enter therapy knowing the outcome cannot be predicted.

Signature (Client or Guardian/Parent)

Date