### ADULT OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT

Welcome to Las Vegas Family Therapy Center. This document contains important information about our 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

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient, and the particular problems you hope to address. There are many different methods I may use to deal with those problems. 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. Because therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. Frequently, individuals may feel worse in the beginning of treatment before feeling better in the middle or late stages of therapy. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But, there are no guarantees as to 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 about whether you feel comfortable working with me. At the end of the evaluation, I will notify you if I believe that I am not the right therapist for you and, if so, I will provide you referrals to other practitioners whom I believe are better suited to help you upon request.

Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the mental health professional 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.

# MEETINGS

I normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 1 to 4 sessions. During this time, we can both decide if I am the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If we agree to begin psychotherapy, I will usually schedule one 45-50 minute session (one appointment hour of 45-50 minutes duration) per week, at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be shorter or longer or more or less frequent when appropriate or necessary. 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. If it is possible, I will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.

# PROFESSIONAL FEES

My hourly fee is $200.00. If we meet more than the usual time, I may charge accordingly. In addition to weekly appointments, I charge this same hourly rate for other professional services you may need, though I will prorate the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other professional services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of 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 any professional time I spend on your legal matter, even if the request comes from another party. I charge $200 per hour for professional services I am asked or required to perform in relation to your legal matter. In regards to testimony, I charge $300 per hour I am at the court house from the start time initially requested by you. I also charge a copying fee of $0.10 per page for records requests.

# 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 such services are requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan. However, any unusual arrangement must be agreed upon in writing prior to the start of the arrangement.

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. If such legal action is necessary, its costs may be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information I will release regarding a patient’s treatment is in accordance with federal, state, and local laws. Information may include, but not limited to his/her name, the dates, times, and nature of services provided, and the amount due.

# 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 necessary, I am willing to call the insurance company on your behalf to obtain clarification. However, I am not a legal professional nor an expert in insurance companies or laws. Thus, any information I may provide should not be interpreted as legal advice.

Please note, Las Vegas Family Therapy Center uses a billing service (Management Resources Billing) for all insurance preauthorization’s, billing, collection of fees from insurances, and other information or services relating to obtaining payment from your insurance company. Due to the rising costs of health care, insurance benefits have increasingly become more complex. It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how much mental health coverage is available. “Managed Health Care” plans often require authorization before they provide reimbursement for mental health services. These plans are often limited to short-term treatment approaches designed to work out specific problems that interfere with a person’s usual level of functioning. It may be necessary to seek approval for more therapy after a certain number of sessions. Though a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, some patients feel that they need more services after insurance benefits end.

Some managed-care plans will not allow me to provide services to you once your benefits end. If this is the case, I will provide you referral for another provider who may be able to help you continue your psychotherapy upon request. You should also be aware that most insurance companies require that I provide them with your clinical diagnosis. Sometimes I have to provide additional clinical information, such as treatment plans, progress notes or summaries, or copies of the entire record (in rare cases). This information will become part of the insurance company files. 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 records I submit, if you request it. ***You*** ***understand that, by using your insurance, you authorize me to release such information to Management Resource Billing and your insurance company. I will try to keep that information limited to the minimum necessary.***

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 our sessions. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself to avoid the problems described above [unless prohibited by the insurance contract].

**Credit/Debit Card, Bank Transfers, or Electronic Payment Use**

Please note, if you choose to pay via credit/debit card, bank account transfer, or any other form of payment requiring the use of electronic payment services you are authorizing LVFTC to release all information (including PHI, credit card numbers, etc.) necessary to obtain payment. Though LVFTC utilizes a HIPPA secure payment service that claims to keep such information confidential, we have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. When utilizing any payment merchant or electronic system, there are always potential risks of breaches in confidentiality due to the requirement for LVFTC to send your information to third-party entities. This poses a risk of information being intercepted by unintended persons despite LVFTC utilizing a HIPPA secured payment platform, complying with HIPPA rules, etc.

Additionally, credit card merchants may store PHI (i.e. names, credit card numbers, email addresses, etc.) or other information, require information regarding the nature of the services provided, or require LVFTC to participate in disputed charges. In any circumstance, LVFTC will attempt to provide only the minimum necessary information to obtain payment for services, aid in disputing charges, etc. By choosing to utilize a credit/debit card or any additional form of payment requiring the use of electronic payment services as a payment option, you authorize LVFTC to provide any information required or needed by any company associated with the payment for reasons including, but not limited to, obtaining payment, settling disputed charges, or any other payment-related requirement by the payment merchant, related companies, or to comply with state and federal laws.

LVFTC utilizes Ivy Pay for all credit/debit cards or other means of payment utilizing electronic payment systems. Ivy Pay is a HIPPA secure, PCI-protected payment app designed for mental health professionals. Upon completing and signing a form stating you understand the limits to confidentiality for utilizing Ivy pay, an invitation to utilize this payment service will be sent to you via text message. The text message will not contain any PHI information and will allow you to access the payment platform which is HIPPA secure. A text message receipt for payment will also be sent by Ivy Pay. Please note, if there are any reasons Ivy Pay sending a text message may be problematic, harmful to you, or create safety issues (such as a partner viewing the text message) this option would not be an acceptable payment for you. By authorizing the use of payments via Ivy Pay, you are acknowledging there are no contraindicated or safety-related problems associated with receiving a text message from Ivy Pay in relation to payment for services received at LVFTC.

LVFTC will not maintain any credit/debit card information on file. However, your credit/debit card, bank account information, or any other information **you decide** to enter into the payment platform will be stored by Ivy Pay. Ivy Pay is HIPPA secure, utilizes PCI-protection, and has stated they maintain the confidentiality of your information. LVFTC will be able to access your payment information and send/receive payment requests for services via the Ivy Pay app. Please note, since Ivy Pay is not affiliated or controlled by LVFTC, LVFTC has no control over any information entered into the platform. **If you prefer to not use a credit card to pay, you may pay with cash or check.**

# CONTACTING ME

I am often not immediately available by telephone. If I am in my office, I probably will not answer the phone when I am with a patient. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by a voice mail that I monitor frequently. I will make every effort to return your call in a timely manner, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform me of some times when you will be available. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. If it is a medical or mental health emergency, a life and death situation, or any situation you feel requires immediate attention, please dial 911 and ask for assistance. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with options to aid in managing an emergency situation, if necessary.

**ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY**

In order to maintain clarity regarding our use of electronic modes of communication during your treatment, I have prepared the following policy. This is because the use of various types of electronic communications is common in our society, and many individuals believe this is the preferred method of communication with others, whether their relationships are social or professional. Many of these common modes of communication, however, put your privacy at risk and can be inconsistent with the law and with the standards of my profession. Consequently, this policy has been prepared to assure the security and confidentiality of your treatment and to assure that it is consistent with ethics and the law.

If you have any questions about this policy, please feel free to discuss this with me.

**Email Communications**

I use email communication and text messaging only with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. That means that email exchanges and text messages with my office should be limited to things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters and other related issues. Please do not email me about clinical matters because email is not a secure way to contact me. If you need to discuss a clinical matter with me, please feel free to call me so we can discuss it on the phone or wait so we can discuss it during your therapy session. The telephone or face-to-face context simply is much more secure as a mode of communication. At Las Vegas Family Therapy Center, we use a HIPPA compliant email service for emails containing Protective Health Information (PHI). Some emails may arrive in your inbox encrypted and require steps for you to complete in order to view the contents of the email.

**Text Messaging**

Because text messaging is a very unsecure and impersonal mode of communication, I do not text message to nor do I respond to text messages from anyone in treatment with me. So, please do not text message me unless we have made other arrangements.

**Social Media**

I do not communicate with, or contact, any of my clients through social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. In addition, if I discover that I have accidentally established an online relationship with you, I will cancel that relationship. This is because these types of casual social contacts can create significant security risks for you.

If I participate on various social networks, it is not in my professional capacity. If you have an online presence, there is a possibility that you may encounter me by accident. If that occurs, please discuss it with me during our time together. I believe that any communications with clients online have a high potential to compromise the professional relationship. In addition, please do not try to contact me in this way. I will not respond and will terminate any online contact no matter how accidental.

**Websites**

I have a website that you are free to access. I use it for professional reasons to provide information to others about me and my practice. You are welcome to access and review the information that I have on my website and, if you have questions about it, we should discuss this during your therapy sessions.

**Web Searches**

I understand that you might choose to gather information about me via searching the internet or other social media platforms. In this day and age there is an incredible amount of information available about individuals on the internet, much of which may actually be known to that person and some of which may be inaccurate or unknown. If you encounter any information about me through web searches, or in any other fashion for that matter, please discuss this with me during our time together so that we can deal with it and its potential impact on your treatment.

Recently it has become fashionable for clients to review their health care provider on various websites. Unfortunately, mental health professionals cannot respond to such comments and related errors because of confidentiality restrictions. If you encounter such reviews of me or any professional with whom you are working, please share it with me so we can discuss it and its potential impact on your therapy. Please do not rate my work with you while we are in treatment together on any of these websites. This is because it has a significant potential to damage our ability to work together.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

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

In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent me from providing any information about your treatment. In some legal proceedings, a judge may order my testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it, and I must comply with that court order. Another exception allowing me to provide information regarding my treatment with you would be if there was legal action taken against me by you.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if I have to reveal some information about a patient’s treatment. For example, if I suspect that a child, “older” person, or disabled person is being abused/neglected or has been abused/neglected, I am required to make a report to the appropriate state agency.

If I believe that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient. If the patient 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 a patient has been injured by a firearm or knife or has serious burns on his/her body, I may be obligated to report the incident to the appropriate authorities. If a similar situation occurs in the course of our work together, I will attempt to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my patient. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. Ordinarily, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I believe that it is important to our work together.

**Psychological Evaluations**

If you are referred for or request a psychological evaluation, the fee for the psychological evaluation will be determined on a case by case basis. Each fee for the completion of a psychological evaluation will be determined by several factors, such as, but not limited to the referral question, expected time for completion, number and type of instruments required/requested, etc. All limits to confidentiality previously discussed in this document apply to patients participating in psychological evaluations. Any additional confidentiality issues/limitations will be discussed with patient’s prior to the start of testing; this includes situations such as, but not limited to establishing an identified patient(s), issues relating to referring (or 3rd) parties, etc. In regards to the psychological evaluation report, a report will be provided to the patient and/or referring entity (identified patient) upon completion of the report. Raw data from assessments will not be provided to parties without appropriate professional qualifications and completed/signed informed consents.

**Group Therapy**

During group therapy, the psychologist or group leader will maintain the same standards of confidentiality and limits of confidentiality previously stated in this document. However, the psychologist or group leader does not have the ability to ensure all patients maintain standards of confidentiality outside of the group session. It is incumbent upon each patient to maintain the confidentiality of information presented by group members during group sessions. If a group member violates other group members’ rights to confidential treatment, each violation will be managed on a case by case basis. Potential consequences for violating group members’ confidentiality may include up to termination from group.

Each group member will be expected to follow all established group rules, complete group assignments, and pay for each group session prior to the start of group (unless an alternative payment plan has been approved between the patient and Las Vegas Family Therapy Center prior to the beginning of group). If any group member does not comply with group rules, engages in serious, aggressive, or significant inappropriate behaviors (as determined by group leaders), or does not appear to be progressing adequately in group, group leaders may take action to remedy the issue. Remedies may include, but are not limited to remediation plans, dismissal from single groups, termination of services, contacting appropriate authorities, etc.

Although this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality is intended to inform you about potential issues that could arise, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have at our next meeting. I will be happy to discuss these issues with you and provide clarification when possible. However, if you need specific clarification or advice I am unable to provide, formal legal advice may be needed, as the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex and I am not an attorney.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

PATIENT SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_