

## **Outpatient Services Agreement for Collateral Participants**

### **INTRODUCTION**

I want to thank you for accepting the invitation to assist in psychotherapeutic treatment for \_\_\_\_\_ . Your participation is important, and is sometimes essential to the success of the treatment. This document is to inform you about the risks, rights and responsibilities of your participation as a collateral participant.

### **WHO IS A COLLATERAL?**

A collateral is usually a spouse, family member, or friend, who participates in therapy to assist the identified patient. The collateral is not considered to be a patient and is not the subject of the treatment. Psychologists have certain legal and ethical responsibilities to patients, and the privacy of the relationship is given legal protection. My primary responsibility is to my patient and I must place their interests first.

### **THE ROLE OF COLLATERALS IN THERAPY**

The role of a collateral will vary greatly. For example, a collateral might attend only one session, either alone or with the patient, to provide information to the therapist and never attend another session, or a collateral might attend all of the patient's therapy sessions and his/her relationship with the patient may be a focus of the treatment. We will discuss your specific role in the treatment.

### **BENEFITS AND RISKS**

Psychotherapy often engenders intense emotional experiences, and your participation may engender strong anxiety or emotional distress. It may also expose or create tension in your relationship with the patient. While your participation can result in better understanding of the patient or an improved relationship, or may even help in your own growth and development, there is no guarantee that this will be the case. Psychotherapy is a positive experience for many, but it is not helpful to all people.

### **MEDICAL RECORDS**

No record or chart will be maintained on you in your role as a collateral. Notes about you may be entered into the identified patient's chart. You have no right to access that chart without the written consent of the identified patient. You will not carry a diagnosis, and there is no individualized treatment plan for you.

### **FEES**

As a collateral, you are not responsible for paying for my professional services unless you are financially responsible for the patient.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The confidentiality of information in the patient's chart, including the information that you provide me, is protected by both federal and state law. It can only be released if the identified patient specifically authorizes me to do so. Exceptions occur if the wellbeing of others is at risk. You are expected to maintain the confidentiality of the identified patient in your role as a collateral.

### **DO COLLATERALS EVER BECOME A FORMAL PATIENT?**

Collaterals may discuss their own problems in therapy, especially problems that interact with issues of the identified patient. If it becomes evident that a collateral is in need of mental health services, the therapist may recommend formal therapy for a collateral. In some cases, when a child is being treated, the parents need couples therapy to improve their relationship so they can function effectively as parents. The clinician may refer you to another clinician for treatment in these situations.

## RELEASE OF INFORMATION

The identified patient is not required to sign an authorization to release information (Authorization Form) to the collateral when a collateral participates in therapy. However, in most instances, the clinician cannot take a call or meet privately with a collateral without an Authorization Form.

## PARENTS AS COLLATERALS

Clinicians specializing in the treatment of children have long recognized the need to treat children in the context of their family. Participation of parents, siblings, and sometimes extended family members, is common and often recommended. Parents in particular have more rights and responsibilities in their role as a collateral than in other treatment situations where the identified patient is not a minor.

In treatment involving children and their parents, access to information is an important and sometimes contentious topic. Particularly for older children, trust and privacy are crucial to treatment success. But parents also need to know certain information about the treatment. For this reason, we need to discuss and agree about what information will be shared and what information will remain private. In general, I believe that parents should be informed about the goals of treatment and how the treatment is going and whether the child comes to his/her appointments. At any time during treatment, I will review progress monitoring with the parents. In addition, I will always inform you if I think that your child is in danger or if he/she is endangering others. One of our first tasks is to discuss and agree on our shared definition of dangerousness so we are all clear about what will be disclosed.

By signing below you indicate that you have read and understood this document and agree to its terms.

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