

## ***PSYCHOLOGIST-CLIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT***

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
INTRODUCTION	1
WHO WE ARE	1
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES	2
SESSIONS	2
APPOINTMENTS	2
OUTSIDE OF SESSION CONTACT	3
PROFESSIONAL FEES/PAYMENTS	3
CONFIDENTIALITY AND LIMITS	3
PROFESSIONAL RECORDS	4
CLIENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES	5
MINORS AND PARENTS	5
SUMMARY	6
SIGNATURE FOR AGREEMENT	7

### **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to The Psychology Centre. This document contains important information about the professional services offered here. In it we explain your rights as a user of our services. As an acknowledgement that you accept our policies we require a signature from each client to indicate that you have been provided with this information. Although this document is long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you read it carefully. Please review it so that any questions you have about our policies and procedures can be addressed during your session. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. You may revoke this agreement in writing at any time.

### **WHO WE ARE**

The Psychology Centre (TPC) is a not-for-profit charitable trust. Our activities include operating as a training clinic for clinical graduate students and a centre for clinical research. Most of the work at TPC is undertaken by our Intern Psychologists and practicum placement students. Qualified and experienced staff Clinical Psychologists provide regular intern/student supervision and undertake a limited amount of client work. All of our Intern Psychologists and Clinical Psychologists are registered health practitioners under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act, and all those providing clinical services abide by the Code of Ethics for Psychologists working in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Psychotherapy and psychological services are not easily described in general statements. They vary depending on the personalities of the psychologist and client, as well as the particular problems being experienced. There are many different methods which can be used to assist with the problems that you hope to address. Here at TPC we endeavour to utilise evidence-based treatments with a collaborative approach to goal setting and in-session work. 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. Since therapy often involves discussing 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 have many benefits. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. While our aim is to help you make life improvements, there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

The first few sessions will involve a gathering of information and evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, some first impressions and recommendations of treatment options will be discussed with you. Based on this you will be able to decide if you would like to proceed with therapy and to help create mutually agreed upon goals and a treatment plan to work towards these goals. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with your current therapist. If you have questions about the process or procedures, these should be discussed whenever they arise. If we are unable to assist you with services at TPC, we will help you identify someone who can.

## **SESSIONS**

Normally an initial evaluation will last for 2 sessions. During this time, we can both decide if your current therapist is the best person to provide the services that you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If psychotherapy is begun, 50-60 minute sessions will be scheduled (usually one per week). However, some sessions may be longer, or more or less frequent depending on the nature of your concern(s).

While most of the treatment provided at the Centre lasts for around 10 to 12 sessions sometimes these can last longer depending on the nature of the concern for which you are being treated or the development of emerging concerns. Because students are onsite for a time limited placement, it is possible that your need for therapy will continue past the point that your therapist is working at this site. Such cases are discussed with clients in advance and if needed, arrangements will be made for you to see another therapist or one of the senior clinicians.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

Attending sessions regularly is important to the success of psychological treatment. At the conclusion of each session we will schedule the following meeting until the completion of the therapy. While a consistent meeting time is often available, because of holidays, continuing education commitments, etc., this is not always the case. If you have specific restrictions on your schedule, please discuss this with your therapist.

Our hours of operation are from 8:30 to 5:00 Monday through Friday. This means that our last scheduled appointment time of the day is at 3:30 p.m. (2:00 p.m. on Fridays). **Since your appointment time is reserved for you and therefore, not available to another client, you will be expected to provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation.** If possible, efforts will be made to find another time to reschedule cancelled appointments. There may be times where you are in need of an appointment sooner than your scheduled appointment. If this occurs please call (07 846 6907) and ask to speak to your therapist.

### **OUTSIDE OF SESSION CONTACT**

Due to the office and student work schedules, it might not be possible to immediately return a phone message. While each individual therapist is not always available daily, someone should be able to assist you by taking a message over the phone Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 5:00. Additionally, non-urgent messages can be left on the TPC answering system. Every effort will be made to return your call at the earliest possible convenience, with the exception of weekends and holidays. Because we do not operate as a crisis service, emergency and after-hours emergency calls cannot be addressed by TPC. In cases of emergency please call 111 or the Mental Health Crisis Assessment Team (CAT) 0800 50 50 50. As a standard policy we do not provide personal contact (home or cell phone) information. Likewise, we discourage the use of e-mail contact as this can be unreliable and inconsistently available.

### **PROFESSIONAL FEES/PAYMENTS**

We have a publicly funded/subsidised healthcare system for New Zealand citizens and permanent residents. The Government requires that all Service Users prove they are eligible to receive publicly funded healthcare. If we ask you for proof of eligibility please do not be offended. We understand that you may find this frustrating. If you are not eligible to receive publicly funded health services please raise this with your psychologist at the first session.

Fees at TPC vary based on a number of factors, including level of therapist training and client hardship. The typical fee per appointment for a fully qualified staff member is \$120.00, for a student intern \$60.00 and for a practicum student \$20.00. Persons currently experiencing financial hardship can ask to discuss reduced fees for interns or practicum students. Fees for psychometric assessments and other services are determined on a case by case basis and can be obtained upon request. In the case of school observation, normal session fees apply. Fees are collected at the end of each session unless prior arrangement is made. We accept cash, cheque and eftpos payments. We do not accept credit cards. Some of our clients are referred under special contacts with Health Waikato or other agencies. In these cases a fee may not be collected as costs are covered by the referring organization.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND LIMITS**

The law protects the privacy of communications between a client and a psychologist. In most situations, information about your treatment will only be released to others if you sign a written authorisation form requesting such a release of information.

However, there are some situations in which your therapist and/or the clinical supervisor could be ethically obligated to take actions in order to protect yourself or others. This could occur if there was high probability of physical harm to yourself, other individuals or society. This may require that some information about your treatment be revealed, but only to persons who require

it to ensure the safety, wellbeing and coordination of care of those potentially affected. If such a situation arises, every effort will be made to fully discuss this matter before taking any action, and disclosure will be limited to what is necessary. In accordance with the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014, your therapist and/or the clinical supervisor will be required to respond to protection concerns of children directly receiving services from this the Centre or indirectly under a client's care. These concerns may be identified through disclosure, or recognition of signs and symptoms in a child. Should this occur, information may be disclosed to other parties that can ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children.

Due to the training nature of the services offered at TPC, non-identifiable information about the clinical work of students is sometimes used for their evaluation by the University of Waikato Clinical Psychology programme. However, information about clients which could lead to identification will not be released without your fully informed consent.

Our students/interns are closely supervised and encouraged to actively reflect on their practice. One way that we do this is to video record some clinical sessions. Under usual circumstances these video recordings are viewed only by the student and/or their supervisor and are then erased. Information from non-recorded sessions are also discussed in supervision meetings, but the same ethical requirements for confidentiality apply. By signing the consent form below you are agreeing to take part in video recording procedures.

Periodically during a student/intern placement or under exceptional circumstances it may be important for a member of the University of Waikato Clinical Psychology programme staff to review a clinical session video. The purpose of such a review is to assess a student/intern's progress in training and their application of clinical knowledge. The University staff member will be a registered clinical psychologist and will be required to view the session recording on-site at TPC. Every effort will be made to inform you of such occurrences.

On occasion, we find it necessary to work as a part of multidisciplinary teams for coordination of care between several of your health providers. Every effort will be made to inform you of such occurrences. To the greatest extent possible we will work to protect your privacy and dignity, but elements of your case relevant to your other health providers could be discussed. These other professionals are obligated to adhere to the rules of confidentiality as mandated by the Health and Disability Commissioner Act (1994) and their professional ethical requirements.

When a referral is received from an external agency we are generally obligated by professional courtesy to continue to liaise with the referring agency regarding on-going assessment and intervention. This is particularly the case when a third party is paying for the service and has requested that a particular assessment/intervention is provided.

We are required to supply non-identifiable data about our work to the Ministry of Health, Project for the Integration of Mental Health Data (PRIMHD). This is linked to individual National Health Identification numbers (NHI) and not directly to client names and addresses. The data supplied relates to service entry/discharge dates and attendance. **No clinical data is requested or provided.** Additional information about PRIMHD is available in our receptions area and on their website ([www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)).

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential limits to confidentiality, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have now or in the future. The laws and ethics governing confidentiality can be quite complex and every effort will be made to assist you in resolving your questions on this topic.

### **PROFESSIONAL RECORDS**

To remain in compliance with New Zealand Health and Disability Sector Standards and the Ethics Code for Psychologists, written records of all client contact are kept in an individual clinical case file. These records could include notes summarising therapy sessions, telephone contact, assessment reports related to treatment and treatment plans, etc. Current records are kept onsite in locked cabinets. Older/closed files are maintained in a secure off-site storage facility. You may examine and/or receive a copy or summary of your Clinical Record, if you request it in writing. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, it is recommended that you initially review them in the presence of your therapist and/or their supervisor, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional so you can discuss the contents. The only time that a release of records might be limited is if it is determined that access to the record is likely to cause substantial harm to yourself or others.

It is our general policy not to release information about sessions involving other parties without the consent of each individual involved. This would include family sessions, couple or marital sessions, parent sessions or sessions where you are not present.

After a period of three months with no scheduled appointments or contact by an existing client, the client record will be closed and treatment will be terminated. Should the need arise; you may contact the office to schedule an appointment to re-establish treatment.

### **CLIENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Your rights are protected under the Code of Consumer's Rights established by the Health & Disability Commissioner (H&DC). The Commissioner has a team of Consumer Advocates located around the country who are available to assist and support you if you have questions about your rights, or if you believe that your rights have been breached. Note: a full copy of the Code of Rights is available from The Psychology Centre, Bennetts Government Bookshops or [www.hdc.org.nz](http://www.hdc.org.nz).

Consistent with the Code of Rights, at TPC we endeavour to provide services that include respect and privacy, fair treatment, non-discrimination, dignity and independence, appropriate standards, effective communication, information, choice and consent, support and rights during teaching and research. Additionally, you also have the right to enquire about your treatment or treatment procedures, seek a second opinion, request a change of therapist or terminate treatment. We also make efforts to ensure that you know the name, position and role of any staff member treating you and the person primarily responsible for your care.

As a client of TPC, we ask that you assist us with the following: Be open and honest with the staff working with you about any past or present mental health treatment you have received. Tell staff immediately if you do not understand treatment instructions, or think you will be unable to follow them. Inform us as soon as you become aware that you will not be able to attend your appointment. Provide us feedback on our services – this helps us to know what we are doing well and what needs improvement. A feedback form will be mailed to you upon completion of your therapy – we rely on this information to help improve our services.

At TPC we make every effort to see that your concerns and complaints are taken seriously. If you do have specific feedback about our facilities or services we request that you first address this with your therapist if possible. Otherwise, you may request a meeting with senior staff/supervisors or you can place your concerns in writing. Concerns/complaints are initially reviewed by the director as efficient and mutually agreeable solutions are often able to be resolved at this level.

### **MINORS & PARENTS**

Clients under 18 years of age who are not living independently and their parents should be aware that the law may allow parents to examine their child's treatment records. Children between 13 and 17 may independently consent to (and control access to the records of) diagnosis and treatment. Because privacy in psychotherapy is often crucial to successful progress, particularly with teenagers, and parental involvement is also essential, it is usually TPC policy for therapists to request an agreement with minors 13 and older and their parents about access to information. This agreement provides that during treatment, parents will be provided with only general information about the progress of the treatment, and the client's attendance at scheduled sessions. Parents can also be provided with a summary of their child's treatment when it is complete. Any other communication will require the child's authorisation, unless it is determined that the child is in danger or is a danger to someone else, in which case, parents will be notified of the concern. Before giving parents any information, the matter will be discussed with the child, if possible, any objections he/she may have will be addressed during this discussion.

### **SUMMARY**

Thank you for taking the time to review this information. Hopefully this will be part of developing a clear and effective treatment relationship. Our goal at TPC is to provide you with the highest quality psychological care and to work in cooperation with you to achieve your treatment goals. Please retain your copy of this information for future reference, and feel free to discuss any questions during your appointments.

I HAVE READ THE PSYCHOLOGY CENTRE'S PSYCHOLOGIST-CLIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT AND AGREE TO ITS TERMS.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Prospective Client

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Legal Guardian (if minor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name

I HAVE PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ABOVE CLIENT TO DISCUSS THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Therapist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name