



PSYCHOLOGIST-CLIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Psychology Centre (TPC), we're glad you decided to work with us. 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 understand what's here. Please review it so that any questions you have about our policies and procedures can be addressed with your psychologist. 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 is a training clinic for the University of Waikato Clinical Psychology training programme. Our activities also include operating as a provider of mental health services for the community, and a centre for clinical research. Most of the work at TPC is undertaken by our fully qualified Clinical Psychologists and Graduate Student Clinicians. Some of the more experienced Clinical Psychologists supervise the work of the Graduate Student Clinicians while they are working at TPC. All of our Clinical Psychologists are fully 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

Psychological assessment and psychotherapy 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. Here at TPC we endeavour to utilise evidence-based assessments 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 initial evaluation will involve a gathering of information and evaluation of your needs. By the end of this process, some first impressions and recommendations of treatment options should be discussed with you. Based on this you will be able to decide if you would like to proceed with therapy by creating treatment 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 1 or 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 8 to 12 sessions, sometimes these can be shorter or longer depending on the nature of the concern for which you are being treated or the development of emerging concerns. Please note that many of the services provided here are often part of contracts with agencies such as the Health New Zealand/Te Whatu Ora Waikato, NZPD, ACC, etc. who sometimes have set specific limits on number of sessions – we will do our best to inform you of any contractual limitations to the services offered. Because the Graduate Student Clinicians who often work here 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.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2019, we have occasionally had to change our method of meeting from an in-person format to video-based. While in-person visits are usually the preferred method of meeting at TPC, we would like our clients to be prepared for the possibility of video-based meetings. Please consider in advance if this is an acceptable meeting format for you and how you might complete such a meeting with levels of privacy you find acceptable.

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, 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 typically 8:30 to 5:00 Monday through Friday. **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 therapist work schedules, it might not be possible to immediately return a message (phone, text or email). 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 4:00. Additionally, non-urgent messages can be left on the TPC answering system or via text or email. Every effort will be made to respond to your message 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 contact cannot be addressed by TPC, and staff and Student Therapists do not have regular access to messages (phone, email, text) outside of business hours. In cases of emergency please call 111 or the Mental Health Crisis Assessment & Home Treatment Service (CAHT) 0800 50 50 50. As a standard policy we do not provide personal contact (home or personal mobile phone) information.

PROFESSIONAL FEES/PAYMENTS

We have a publicly funded/subsidised healthcare system for New Zealand citizens and permanent residents. The Government requires that all users of Te Whatu Ora funded services prove they are eligible to receive publicly funded healthcare. We may ask you for proof of eligibility, please do not be offended. If you are *not* eligible to receive publicly funded health services please raise this with your psychologist at the first session and we will see what we can do to assist with this.

Fees at TPC vary based on a number of factors, including the contract under which you are being seen at the Centre. The typical fee per appointment for a fully qualified staff member is \$160.00 (+GST) and \$80.00 (+GST) for a Graduate Student Clinician. Persons under specific contracts such as Adult Mental Health Services, Triage Team, Sexual Health Clinic or Police Department may be seen at no cost for a contracted number of sessions. Additional sessions can sometimes be arranged with your treatment provider, or on a fee-for-service basis.

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 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 relevant children.

Due to the training nature of the services offered at TPC, non-identifiable information about the clinical work of Graduate Student Clinicians 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 (in this instance we would request a separate university consent form).

Our Graduate Student Clinicians are closely supervised and encouraged to actively reflect on their practice. One way that we do this is for them to video record their clinical sessions. Under usual circumstances these video recordings are viewed only by the student and/or their supervisor and are then erased within two weeks. Information from any non-recorded sessions are also discussed in supervision meetings, but the same ethical requirements for confidentiality apply. You will likely be asked if you are willing to have your sessions video recorded for these supervisory purposes, but you can decline this if you so choose. By signing the consent form below you are agreeing to take part in video recording procedures, unless you tick the box indicating otherwise. If you are being seen by one of the fully registered staff members, you more than likely will **not** be asked to be video recorded.

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. For example, we are contractually obligated to provide information confirming the initiation of services and a brief discharge summary to Te Whatu Ora's Triage Team, for person's referred via these pathways.

Data contained in clinical records may be used for archival research purposes. That is, we may use data gathered from closed cases to answer clinical research questions (i.e. reviews of records to describe clinic referrals, outcomes and trends). Access to and use of data for research purposes will be limited to only those under close supervision of a qualified TPC staff member. Results of any such research or evaluations will not be published or otherwise disseminated in a form that could reasonably be expected to identify any individual, so that confidentiality will be maintained. Occasionally specific research programmes are conducted at the Centre which could benefit from client participation. It is possible you could be asked to participate in one of these opportunities. The full nature of this would be explained in a separate consent document and your participation would be entirely voluntary and unrelated to your ability to receive services at TPC. You can elect to not be part of research efforts at any time and without any penalty.

Because we receive partial funding from Health New Zealand/Te Whatu Ora and ACC, we are required to comply with occasional audits of our services and functioning as an organisation. As part of this programme, auditors are required to review policies, procedures and clinical service profession for quality control purposes. While they can access some clinical information as part of

this process, these auditors are obligated to adhere to the rules of confidentiality as mandated by the Health and Disability Commissioner Act (1994).

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 on-site in locked cabinets or in a secure 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 (Code of Ethics for Psychologists working in Aotearoa/New Zealand).

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. Likewise we are unable to release copyrighted test information (sometimes called 'raw' test data).

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 online at www.hdc.org.nz.

Consistent with the Code of Rights, here 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 psychological services, 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 at 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 assessment or treatment methods, 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 offered to you upon completion of your therapy – we rely on this information to help improve our services).

After a period of three months with no scheduled appointments or contact by an existing client, the client record will be closed and treatment terminated. Likewise, we reserve the right to terminate a course of therapy after two occurrences of un-notified non-attendance (DNA). Should the need arise; you may contact the office to schedule an appointment to re-establish treatment, but this likely will require a return to our waitlist or a re-referral to the Centre.

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/supervisor 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. We also make available an anonymous feedback form to clients after completion of services.

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 access to 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/young person, 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 UNDERSTAND 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

☐ I decline video recording

(This signed page is to be retained in the client clinical file)