

Sarah L. Wesch, Ph.D. LLC

PRACTICE POLICIES

This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. I know it's tempting to skip reading boring legal agreements. However, what's written below is important. Please read it carefully and note any questions you might have so that you can ask me before our first session. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and my practice, Sarah L. Wesch, Ph.D., LLC.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychotherapy requires very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to agree to 1) be open and truthful about yourself, 2) set concrete goals to work towards, and 3) follow through with the strategies discussed in session.

APPOINTMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

Please remember to cancel or reschedule 24 hours in advance. You will be responsible for a \$50 cancellation fee if cancellation is less than 24 hours, unless we mutually agree that the cancellation was beyond your reasonable control. This is necessary because a time commitment is made to you and is held exclusively for you. If you are late for a session, you may lose some of that session time.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

I work with a limited number of insurance plans. You should call your insurance company prior to the first session to confirm that psychotherapy services are covered and confirm that you don't need a referral. Sometimes, patients are surprised that their coverage is not what they thought it would be, so it's essential that you confirm your coverage before our first session. In the event that you forgo insurance and pay out of pocket, you will be responsible for paying my fee at the time of your session.

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

If we are billing to insurance, you will either be responsible for a co-pay or, if you are on a high-deductible plan, the full amount of the session charge. I cannot guarantee that your insurance company will cover my services. If your insurance company does not cover your treatment, you will be responsible for paying my fee. Again, this is why it is very important that you check with insurance about your coverage for my services prior to our first appointment. Through my patient portal, you can pay with your balance with a credit card or Health Savings Card. You can also pay me with cash or a check.

If you are finding it difficult to pay your account in full, please let me know. We can make arrangements for a payment plan that will work for you. Please communicate openly about this so we can work out an arrangement.

SESSION LENGTH

The therapy “hour” allows for notes and coordination time, so each session is slightly shorter than described (e.g. an “hour” session runs 53 minutes.) I charge everyone the same per hour fee. Per my contract with BC/BS, I am unable to offer a lower fee to cash paying patients. However, we can work to reduce the cost by scheduling sessions less often or scheduling shorter, 45-minute or half hour, sessions.

FEES FOR LEGAL INVOLVEMENT

If you become involved in legal proceedings that require participation on my part, you will be expected to pay my hourly rate for that professional time even if I am called to testify by another party.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

The laws and standards of my profession require me to keep treatment records. Should you wish, you are entitled to receive a copy of your records, or I can prepare a summary for you instead. Because these are professional records, I recommend that you review them in my presence so that we can discuss the contents.

Currently, I am using an Electronic Health Record (EHR) system called Simple Practice. In this system, your records will be stored online under bank-level encryption. This enables me to more easily process your insurance claims, provides a more secure method of communication with patients and gives me access to your records outside of my normal office hours. This system is HIPAA compliant. If you have any concerns about your records being stored in this way, I can make an exception for you and store your treatment notes on paper, in a locked file cabinet in my office. However, billing information, including a diagnosis code, will still need to be sent through my online system.

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.

Information Provided to Insurance Companies. Most insurance companies require you to authorize your therapist to provide them with information about treatment and diagnosis. I will make every effort to limit the amount of information transmitted to the insurance company. Sometimes insurance is provided additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of the entire record (in rare cases). This information will become part of the insurance company records.

Legal Proceedings. In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent your treatment records from being used. However, proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may require my records, or testimony.

Security Clearance. Should you seek a professional position that requires high-level security clearance, they will ask you to report any history of psychological treatment. They will request your records, including past mental health diagnoses.

Protecting Vulnerable Persons from Neglect or Abuse. There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if it means revealing some information about a patient's treatment. For example, if it is believed that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is harmed or being abused, I am required by law to file a report with the appropriate state agency.

Protecting Others from Violence. If it is believed that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required by law to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient.

Protecting Patients from Self-Harm. The topic of suicidal thoughts often arises in therapy and, for the most part, can be discussed without further action. However, if you are at serious risk of harming yourself, others will need to be informed. I will work with you to contact family members and/or treatment centers to get you the help that you need. If you refuse to take these actions, I will need to take action to protect you, which may include contacting family members, the police or a treatment facility. I will always try my best to work with you in this situation and will not take actions without attempting to inform you of my intent.

Consultation. It is occasionally helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of patients. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, you will not be informed about these consultations unless it is deemed to be important to our work together.

Fortunately, situations in which confidentiality must be broken are rare in my practice. Should a situation like this arise, I will make every effort to fully discuss the situation with you prior to taking action.

TELEPHONE ACCESSIBILITY

If you need to contact me between sessions, please leave a message with my answering service or on my voicemail. I am often not immediately available; however, I will attempt to return your call within 24 hours. If a true emergency situation arises, please call 911 or any local emergency room.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Due to the importance of your confidentiality and the importance of minimizing dual relationships, I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site.. I believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up when we meet and we can talk more about it.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

I cannot ensure the confidentiality of any form of communication through electronic media, including text messages. If you prefer to communicate via email or text messaging for issues regarding scheduling or cancellations, I will do so. While I may try to return messages in a timely manner, I cannot guarantee immediate response and request that you do not use these methods of communication to discuss therapeutic content and/or request assistance for emergencies.

MINORS

If you are a minor, your parents may be legally entitled to some information about your therapy. I will discuss with you and your parents what information is appropriate for them to receive and which issues are more appropriately kept confidential.

TERMINATION OF PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Normally, the therapeutic relationship is terminated once both therapist and client mutually agree that the goals of therapy have been achieved. Therapy will also be considered terminated if the client discontinues communication, without prior notice, and does not respond to my attempts to be in contact for more than 3 weeks.

BY CLICKING ON THE CHECKBOX BELOW I AM AGREEING THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREE TO THE ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.