



CONSENT AGREEMENT TO FORM A THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

In office and/or virtually

Part I: BASIC AGREEMENT

This Consent Agreement is between _____ and
NORTHWEST COUNSELING, INC. Client(s) Name (Print)

NORTHWEST COUNSELING, INC. (NCI) is a corporation organized under the laws of the State of Arkansas for the purposes of providing Mental Health Counseling. NCI is jointly owned and operated by William D. Oldham, LPC, Matthew Sweetser, LCSW, and Mollie Sweetser, LPC.

All counselors and interns function under the counseling licensure laws of the State of Arkansas. To inquire about any licensed counselor or to lodge a complaint you may contact the licensing agency at: Arkansas State Board of Examiners in Counseling, 101 E. Capitol, Suite 104, Little Rock, AR 72201, (501) 683-5800.

Social Workers function under the social work licensure laws of the State of Arkansas. To inquire about any licensed social worker or to lodge a complaint you may contact the licensing agency at: Arkansas Social Work Licensing Board, P.O. Box 251965, Little Rock, Arkansas 72225, (501) 372-5071.

Nurse Practitioners function under the Nurse Practice Act with the Arkansas State Board of Nursing. To inquire about any licensed Nurse Practitioner or to lodge a complaint, you may contact the licensing agency at: Arkansas State Board of Nursing, University Tower Bldg., 1123 South University, Suite 800, Little Rock, AR72204-1619, (501) 686-2700.

All persons are served regardless of age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, or national origin.

Your relationship with NCI is voluntary. You may question treatment methods and may refuse individual treatment methods or terminate the provider/patient relationship at any time. If you refuse treatment, you will be provided with referral information for other therapists who are qualified to help you.

Part II: CONFIDENTIALITY

All information you provide to NCI, by spoken word or any other media, will be kept in strict confidence and held in protected files. Written or other information about your case will not be revealed to any other person or agency without your written permission, except when required to do so by law.

All treatment notes and treatment plans may be reviewed upon request though, for therapeutic reasons, it is generally discouraged. Any notes taken by the provider during a session are the exclusive property of the provider. They may not be shared with anyone else, for any reason and you do not have a right to review any personal session notes.

Only information necessary to process insurance claims or in routine office procedures will be available to office secretarial staff.

NCI is committed to provide excellence in counseling and medical practice. Peer counselor reviews and counselor supervision are a regular and sometimes required part of maintaining the quality of counseling provided. Peer and supervision reviews are done anonymously. Your name and personal information will be diligently withheld. Your counselor may periodically review your case with a peer counselor or supervisor.

By your expressed written consent, you may direct NCI to provide any part of your record or summary thereof to other persons or entities you specifically designate. In the event of such a request, NCI will inform you how such release of information may harm or benefit you, so far as can be anticipated.

There are a variety of situations in which NCI is bound by law to reveal information to persons or agencies without your permission. These situations are rare. NCI will make every reasonable effort to inform you prior to complying with a legal requirement to surrender your information though NCI is not legally required to inform you prior to such required legal disclosures. Situations that would require us to provide confidential information to third parties include the following:

1. When there is a known life-threatening situation in which breaking confidence might prevent harm to you or others.
2. When there is known or reported abuse of children or elderly persons.
3. Situations required by law, such as, but not limited to a legal subpoena or court order.
4. If you or someone on your behalf files a lawsuit against Northwest Counseling, Inc. or any of its employees or associates.

In all cases in which confidentiality cannot be kept, the information provided would be limited to only that which is necessary to resolve the particular legal issues or safety concerns.

Part III: THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS

NCI makes every effort to ensure your therapy is beneficial. It is our goal to work with you to provide lasting improvement in your life. Counseling and medication management is driven by your goals in a supportive therapeutic relationship with your provider. It may at times be difficult. You may undergo significant personal and relationship changes, during which you may experience strong feelings of pain, anger, fear, guilt, frustration and other negative feelings associated with these changes.

You have a major role in the therapeutic process as well. You may share or withhold any information you wish but it is important to be as truthful during your appointment as possible. Please make every effort to follow the therapy directives and cooperate with the provider.

Spiritual formation is an important and personal part of most clients' lives. Developing spiritual resources are sometimes helpful in bringing lasting change. If you so desire, NCI counselors are prepared to spiritual matters with you in the context of your therapeutic process. At all times, your personal spiritual perspective will be respected and supported.

Part IV: TELEHEALTH or TECHNOLOGY ASSISTED COUNSELING

Telehealth is simply using technology to provide counseling or other mental health services while the provider and patient are not face to face in the same room. Examples of Video conferencing or chat, telephone calls, texting and email are all examples of Telehealth methods.

Potential Benefits and Risks of Telehealth

The benefits of teletherapy include the convenience of location, time, wait times and accessibility which allows for better continuity of care. In addition, teletherapy allows for greater accessibility to services for clients with limited mobility or with lack of transportation. Teletherapy can also allow for couples or families to meet when in different locations.

With all of the benefits, there are also some limitations. Technology may occasionally fail before or during our session. The problems may be related to internet connectivity, difficulties with hardware, software, equipment, and/or services supplied by a 3rd party. Any problems with internet availability or connectivity are outside the control of the provider and the provider makes no guarantee that such services will be available or work as expected. If something occurs to prevent or disrupt any scheduled appointment due to technical

complications and the session cannot be completed via online video, the provider will attempt to troubleshoot on their end to see if it can be completed. If not, the provider will call you back to complete the session via the telephone number you have provided.

Who can conduct Telehealth Treatment?

Typically, Telehealth Treatment can only be conducted by Specially licensed mental health professionals who have special training in technology assisted therapies. Some practitioners at Northwest Counseling, Inc. do not have the technology-assisted specialization. In special circumstances, the requirements for this Specialty License can be waived such as when the Governor issues an Emergency Executive Order or similar directive given in March 2020 temporarily allowing all mental health providers to engage in Technology Assisted appointments during a crisis.

Unique concerns to be aware of related to telehealth include:

1) Possible misunderstandings: The client should be aware that misunderstandings are possible with telephone, text-based modalities such as email, and real-time internet chat, since nonverbal cues are relatively lacking. Even with video chat software, misunderstandings may occur, since bandwidth is always limited and images lack detail. Mental health providers are observers of human behavior and gather much information from body language, vocal inflection, eye contact, and other non-verbal cues. If you have never engaged in online appointments before, have patience with the process and clarify information if you think your provider has not understood you well. Be patient if your provider asks periodically for clarification as well.

2). Turnaround Time: Using asynchronous (not in “real time”) communication such as email entails a “lag” of response. The provider will make every effort to respond to email requests within a 12 to 24 hour period. If the client is in a state of crisis or emergency, the counselor recommends the client contact the crisis line or an agency local to the client. Clients may also utilize 1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-273-TALK (for the deaf: 1-800-799-4TTY).

3). The client agrees to take full responsibility for the security of any communication or treatment on their own computer and in their own physical location. It is recommended to use headphones during sessions. The client understands that they are solely responsible for maintaining the strict confidentiality of my user ID and password and not allow another person to use my user ID to access the services. The client also understands that they are responsible for using the technology used during appointment in a secure and private location so that others cannot hear their conversations.

The provider has a right to his/her privacy and may wish to restrict the use of any copies or records the client makes of their communications. Clients must seek the permission of the provider before recording any portion of the session and/or posting any portion of said session on social media or any website.

Safeguards

The video, phone, and email platform NCI utilizes is through GSuite (google). If technology fails, we can also utilize a video platform called Regroup. These platforms are HIPAA compliant and allow for the highest possible security and confidentiality of your protected health information. Your personal information is encrypted and stored on a secure server. As mentioned above, the client is responsible for creating and using additional safeguards on their end. Please discuss any such concerns with your provider early in your first session so as to develop strategies to limit risk. The client should be aware that any information including attachments sent by the client from their personal email is not secure and chooses to do so at their own risk.

Alternatives

