



**SELBY PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, PLLC**

**www.doctorselby.com**

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## **OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT**

Welcome to Selby Psychological Services (SPS). This document contains important information about our professional services and business policies. An updated version is always available online at [www.doctorselby.com](http://www.doctorselby.com) for your convenience. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between yourself and SPS.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient, and the particular problems you bring forward. There are many different methods we may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. 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 benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Our first session will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, we will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with a SPS psychologist. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about our procedures, you should discuss them with us whenever they arise. We will discuss with you the risks and benefits of any procedures used. If your doubts persist, we will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion. In addition, if we are not in my judgment able to help you, because of the kind of problem you have or because my training and skills are in my judgment not appropriate, we will inform you of this fact and refer you to another therapist who may meet your needs. In addition, if you do violence to, threaten (verbally or physically) or otherwise harass a SPS psychologist, the office, or our families, we reserve the right to pursue legal and police action against you. We also reserve the right to terminate you unilaterally and immediately from treatment. If we terminate you from therapy, we will offer you referrals to other sources of care, but cannot guarantee that they will accept you for therapy.

### **MEETINGS AND CANCELLATION POLICY**

For your initial visit we request that you arrive 20 minutes prior to the session to fill out required paperwork. All of this paperwork (as well as directions to our office) can be downloaded from [www.doctorselby.com](http://www.doctorselby.com) and filled out prior to the session, thus not requiring you to arrive early. We normally conduct an initial evaluation that will last one session. During this time we can both decide if your SPS psychologist is the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If psychotherapy is begun, we will usually schedule one 45-minute session (one appointment hour of 45 minutes duration) per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent. Once an appointment hour is scheduled you are responsible for coming to your session on time and at the time we have scheduled. If you are late, we will end on time and not run over into the next person's session. If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel with less than twenty-four hours' notice you must pay for that session in full at our next regularly scheduled meeting. The answering machine has a time and date stamp which will keep track of time to cancellation. We

cannot bill these sessions to your insurance. The only exception to this rule is if you would endanger yourself by attempting to come which we both must agree to (for instance, a major snow storm). For your convenience SPS will offer you an appointment card reminder as well as an e-mail reminder with your permission.

## **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

The current fee for a 45 minute initial diagnostic interview is \$165.00. This one time evaluation is an in-depth psychological assessment of your current functioning which provides diagnosis and treatment recommendations. Following this initial session, the current fee for ongoing 45 minute sessions with a psychologist for individual psychotherapy, couples therapy or family therapy is \$110.00. You may only pay a portion (e.g., co-payment, co-insurance) of the contracted fee rate of your managed care organization depending on your insurance coverage (see [www.doctorselby.com](http://www.doctorselby.com) for contracted insurance organizations). You may have to pay the entire contracted fee amount if your insurance plan has a significant deductible for mental health services. All fees are due at time of service which is customary. We highly recommend that you check your mental health benefits personally with your insurance company (see Insurance Reimbursement below). In addition to weekly appointments, we charge this amount for other professional services you may need, though we will break down the hourly cost if we work for periods of less than one hour. Other services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized preparation of records or treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other service you may request or is required of SPS. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require SPS participation, you will be expected to pay for our professional time even if a SPS psychologist is called to testify by another party.

## **BILLING AND PAYMENTS**

As mentioned previously, you will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage which requires another arrangement. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. Payment is collected at the beginning or end of each session. We are not willing to have a patient run a bill with us. For your convenience you may use Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express in making a payment. You may also pay with a check or cash. For questions about billing and making payments please contact Dr. Christine Selby via email ([drchristineselby@hushmail.com](mailto:drchristineselby@hushmail.com)) or by phone (207-299-2552).

If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, SPS has the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information SPS will release regarding a patient's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

## **INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT**

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. We will verify benefits with your insurance company at the beginning of treatment. We will also provide you with whatever assistance we can in helping you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; however, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of our fees. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers and have all information pertinent to identifying your insurance. You must provide us with any forms, completely filled out as needed, your complete insurance identification information, and the complete address of the insurance company.

You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services. If you have questions about the coverage, call your plan administrator. Of course, we will provide you with whatever information we can based on our experience and will be happy to help you in understanding the information you receive from your insurance company.

Due to the rising costs of health care, insurance benefits have increasingly become more complex. It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how much mental health coverage is available. "Managed Health Care" plans such as HMOs and PPOs often require authorization before they provide reimbursement for mental health services. These plans are often limited to short-term treatment approaches designed to work out specific problems that interfere with a person's usual

level of functioning. It may be necessary to seek approval for more therapy after a certain number of sessions. While a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, some patients feel that they need more services after insurance benefits end.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize me to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes we have to provide 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 files and will probably be stored in a computer. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, we have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. In some cases, they may share the information with a national medical information databank. We will provide you with a copy of any report SPS submits, if you request it.

Once we have all of the information about your insurance coverage, we will discuss what we can expect to accomplish with the benefits that are available and what will happen if they run out before you feel ready to end our sessions. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself to avoid the problems described above, unless this is prohibited by your managed care organization.

## **CONTACTING SPS FOR SCHEDULING OR CRISIS**

SPS psychologists are often not immediately available by telephone. While we are often in our office we probably will not answer the phone when we are with patients. When we are unavailable, our telephone is answered by voice mail. We monitor this frequently. We will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform us of some times when you will be available. **If you feel that you are in crisis you can contact the CHCS Warm Line at #1-800-490-8748** which will typically coordinate with us regarding your call with your permission. **If you feel that you are experiencing an emergency call 911 or go immediately to the nearest emergency room.** If we will be unavailable for an extended time, we will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

## **PROFESSIONAL RECORDS**

The laws and standards of my profession require that SPS keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of your records, or we can prepare a summary for you instead. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. If you wish to see your records, we recommend that you review them in my presence so that we can discuss the contents. Patients will be charged an appropriate fee for any professional time in the same manner as any other professional (clinical) service and you will be billed accordingly.

## **MINORS**

If you are under eighteen years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents/guardians the right to examine your treatment records. It is my policy to request an agreement from parents/guardians that they agree to give up access to your records. If they agree, we will provide them only with general information about our work together, unless we feel there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or someone else or if behaviors are deemed high risk for your health or wellbeing. In this case, we will notify them of our concern. We will usually ask your parent/guardian to meet with us briefly at the start of sessions. Before giving your parent/guardian any information, we will discuss the matter with you, if possible, and do our best to handle any objections you may have with what we am prepared to discuss.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist is protected by law, and we can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. But there are a few exceptions.

In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent a SPS psychologist from providing any information about your treatment. In some proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may order our testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it.

There are some situations in which we are legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if we have to reveal some information about a patient's treatment. For example, if we believe that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused or neglected, we must file a report with the appropriate state agency.

If a SPS psychologist believes that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, we are required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient. If the patient threatens to harm himself/herself, we may be obligated to seek or order hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection. These situations have rarely occurred in our practice. If a similar situation occurs, we will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action. We also may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, we make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of our patient. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, we will not tell you about these consultations unless we feel that it is important to our work together.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have at our next meeting. We will be happy to discuss these issues with you if you need specific advice, but formal legal advice may be needed because the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex, and we are not attorneys.

You should also be aware that you are protected under the provisions of the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Please see [www.doctorselby.com](http://www.doctorselby.com) for an updated HIPAA statement regarding our services. This statement is also available in printed form in our office.

This law insures the confidentiality of all electronic transmission of information on about you. When SPS transmits information about you electronically (for example faxing information), it is done with special safeguards to insure confidentiality.

*A special statement regarding e-mail:*

If you elect to communicate with SPS by email at some point in our work together, please be aware that email is not completely confidential. All emails are retained in the logs of your or my internet service provider. While under normal circumstances no one looks at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of the internet service provider. Please do not engage in crisis or emergency communication via e-mail. Please see the above statements regarding crisis and emergency procedures. Any email we receive from you, and any responses that we send to you, will be printed out and kept in your treatment record.

**COMPLAINTS**

If you're dissatisfied with therapy, we hope you'll discuss this with your SPS psychologist so that we can respond to your concerns. We will take such criticism seriously, with care and respect, and will attempt to address your complaint in a way that allows for a mutual resolution. If this is not successful and if you believe that your SPS psychologist has behaved unethically, you can make a complaint about this to the Board of Examiners of Psychologists, Office of Licensing and Registration, 3 5 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0035 .

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during your professional relationship with SPS.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
SPS Psychologist (Witness)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date