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PRIVATE PRACTICE OF STEPHEN H. CHOU, PSY.D.
OFFICE POLICIES

Welcome to the practice of Stephen H. Chou, Psy.D. We are honored to serve children, adolescents, families, couples, and adults from multicultural backgrounds and within a multi-systemic framework. Our services include individual, couples, family, child play, and group therapy, as well as psychological assessments.

This document contains important information about our professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

We have outlined some of our procedures to acquaint you with the practice. Please feel free to ask questions and make suggestions at any time.

Consultation

A consultation may be one of the first meetings with a psychologist/counselor. The purpose of the consultation is to discuss the most significant questions that you may have as well as understand their strengths/areas of resilience to determine a greater understanding of yourself or your child/youth. It may consist of an elicitation of a complete history, review of significant relevant documentation, and a mental status exam to provide an initial impression and plan of care for counseling or evaluation plan for assessment/evaluation.

The initial consultation hourly fee for licensed psychologists is \$300.

Counseling

Counseling (traditionally known as therapy or psychotherapy) is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and each person who seeks counseling, and the particular difficulties that are brought forward. Broadly, counseling is a reaffirming and possibly transformative process in which you learn you cope and deal with the difficulties that challenge you in life, or simply to grow as a person. I primarily work from a cognitive behavioral framework within a developmental, systems, and culturally respectful frame; which is to say, I enjoy noticing a person's own strengths and resiliencies and the relationship each person has with themselves and their families, work, school, and other systems in which they live. Counseling is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. Successful counseling requires effort on your part.

Counseling can have benefits and risks. Since counseling may involve discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, counseling has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it and may also include discussing successes and enjoyable aspects of your life. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Structure of Counseling

Our first few sessions will involve an assessment of your needs. By the end of the assessment, I will offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow if you decide to continue with counseling. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. Counseling 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 my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

The typical appointment lasts 50-minutes (one appointment hour of 50 minutes duration) per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be longer or shorter or more or less frequent, as we arrange. Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation, unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control. If it is possible, we will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.

Psychological Assessments

Assessments are evaluations of intelligence, achievement (oral language, reading, writing, mathematics), processing, attention/executive functioning, emotional functioning, social functioning, and personality for children, youth, and adults. The primary purpose of the assessment is to provide relevant, professionally sound results or opinions, in matters where a person's health and well-being would like to be clarified or defined in standardized terms. As such, the assessment may be utilized for clinical, educational, or other purposes as appropriate, including diagnosis, eligibility determination for special programs, and evaluation of current status, or of progress and change. The evaluation often addresses the particular psychological and developmental needs of the child and/or parent(s), youth, or adult through multiple information sources including norm-referenced tests, interviews, observations, and other informal assessments.

Structure of Psychological Assessment

A psychological assessment may vary in duration from 1-1/2 hours to 8 hours over 1 to 4 sessions, depending upon what is being evaluated. A psychological assessment generally is conducted within a clinical setting, such as an office, or another setting, such as a child's school.

Benefits and Limitations of Psychological Assessment

The benefits of psychological assessment could include, but are not limited to: identifying specific cognitive strengths and weaknesses, identifying specific learning disabilities, helping to determine the most effective teaching strategies for my child, helping to determine the most appropriate classes and/or school placement, determining whether special academic remediation is needed, comparing intellectual gains or losses over time, or after academic/therapeutic intervention, etc.

The limitations could include, but are not limited to: biases inherent in the test materials or procedures due to differences in cultural, ethnic backgrounds, social, economic and educational opportunities, physical and/or sensory limitations, language abilities (including non-native English speakers), emotional, psychological and/or behavioral disturbances, etc.

I understand that there are various potential biases and limitations in psychological testing. As such, test results are interpreted sensitively and cautiously with the individual's unique differences kept closely in mind.

Professional Fees

The hourly fee for licensed psychologists/clinicians is \$250. Payment is expected at the time of each session. Please let us know if you will need a statement of services for insurance reimbursement. 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 15 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 of me. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for professional time at a rate of \$750/hour even if I am called to testify by another party.

Psychological Assistants

In the practice, I provide clinical experiences for psychological assistants. Psychological assistants are registered graduate-level mental health trainees who have either a masters degree in psychology, a doctoral degree in psychology, or who are advanced

to candidacy for a doctoral degree in psychology. Psychological assistants in my practice provide assessment and treatment under my direct supervision. The hourly fee for an assessment or counseling session with a psychological assistant is \$150-200 unless special circumstances apply.

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 fill out forms and 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 my fees. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers.

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. If it is necessary to clear confusion, we will be willing to call the company on your behalf.

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. Some managed-care plans will not allow us to provide services to you once your benefits end. If this is the case, we will do our best to find another provider who will help you continue your counseling (and/or assessment as it applies).

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize us 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 we submit, 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 services yourself to avoid the problems described above unless prohibited by contract.

Contacting Me

We are available by either telephone at _____ or email at _____. When we are unavailable, our telephone is answered with voicemail that records confidential messages, which we monitor frequently. We will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. Please inform us of some times when you will be available. Alternatively, email is a viable manner of communication. In the event of an emergency, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. You may also call 9-1-1 or, in case of psychiatric emergency, Psychiatric Emergency Services at 650-573-2662 (CA) or 303-602-7220 (CO). If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

Transmitted Material

Internet transmissions are never completely private or secure. You understand that any message or information you send to us may be read or intercepted by others, unless there is a special notice that a particular message is encrypted.

Professional records

As we are sure you are aware, we are required to keep records of the professional services we provide for our work together. Because these records contain information that can be misunderstood by someone who is not a mental health professional, it is our general policy that clients may not review them; however, we will provide at your written request a treatment summary unless we believe that to do so would be emotionally damaging. If that is the case, we will be happy to send the summary to another mental health professional who is working with you. You should be aware that this will be treated 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 the right to examine your treatment records. It is our policy to request an agreement from parents 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. In this case, we will notify them of our concern. We will also provide them with a summary of your treatment when it is complete. Before giving them 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 are prepared to discuss.

Confidentiality

In general, the privacy of all communications between a client and a psychologist/counselor 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 us from providing any information about your treatment. However, a judge, after reviewing records, may order us to release your records to the court. In some proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may also order my 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 client's treatment. For example, if we believe that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused, we are obligated to inform an appropriate agency or police.

If we believe that a client 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 client. If the client threatens to harm himself/herself, we may be obligated to seek 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 such a situation occurs, we will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

We 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 any client. 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.

Confidentiality of E-mail, Cell Phone and Faxes Communication: It is very important to be aware that e-mail and cell phone (also cordless phones) communication can be relatively easily accessed by unauthorized people and hence, the privacy and confidentiality of such communication can be easily compromised. E- mails, in particular, are vulnerable to such unauthorized access due to the fact that servers have unlimited and direct access to all e-mails that go through them. Faxes can be sent erroneously to the wrong address. Please notify us at the beginning of treatment if you decide to avoid or limit in any way the use of any or all of the above-mentioned communication devices. Please do not use e-mail or faxes in emergency situations.

I, _____, hereby make request for myself, or my minor child, _____
_____, to receive care and treatment/

psychological assessment voluntarily from _____ (_____
Name and degree License/Registration No.

I am authorized to consent to treatment/psychological assessment and I have read the above information and agree to accept treatment for myself/my child. I further agree to abide by the terms of this agreement during our professional relationship.

Client/Parent or Legal Guardian Signature

Date

Minor's signature (optional)

Date

Practitioner:

Date