



Informed Consent

Enclosed within these forms is information about Doodlebug Counseling services and business policies. It is crucial to review this information before your initial session. Should you have any questions regarding these policies, your therapist is available to address them with you.

Therapy Services – Risks and Benefits:

As the therapist, my role is to aid clients in navigating issues related to relationships, addictions, and emotional challenges such as depression, anxiety, and grief. Therapy often involves exploring challenging aspects of one's life, which may evoke feelings of sadness, guilt, shame, anger, or frustration. Furthermore, the therapeutic process and decisions made may impact significant relationships, potentially altering or ending them. However, therapy can also lead to healthier relationships, problem-solving skills, and reduced feelings of distress, anxiety, and depression. Should you ever have concerns about your therapy process, we encourage open discussion during your sessions to collaboratively navigate your experience.

Termination of Therapy:

You retain the right to terminate therapy at any point. Upon reaching the conclusion of our work together, we kindly request scheduling one final session to review progress. Should you wish to return to therapy in the future, Doodlebug Counseling maintains an open-door policy, welcoming the opportunity to work with you again. However, re-engagement will be subject to your therapist's clinical discretion and availability. Should immediate availability not be feasible, we are pleased to offer three referrals to other therapists or agencies.

Length of Therapy:

Therapy duration varies for each client, depending on the challenges they present. Some issues may be effectively addressed in a relatively short timeframe (10-20 sessions), while others may require more extended treatment. Predicting the exact duration of therapy is challenging and is best discussed in your initial session. Together with your therapist, you will establish treatment goals and a plan tailored to your needs. If you have questions about the length of treatment, feel free to discuss this with your therapist at any point during therapy.



Dual Therapy:

Unless there is a compelling clinical reason, a crisis, or a specialized treatment plan, we do not work with clients concurrently under the care of another therapist. If you are currently seeing another therapist, please inform us so we can discuss next steps. If your therapist has referred you to Doodlebug Counseling for specialized treatment, we require your signed consent to coordinate care with your primary therapist and develop a clinical plan that best supports your progress.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality is necessary to the therapeutic process, and all therapy services are strictly confidential. Information shared during sessions may not be disclosed without your written permission. Exceptions to confidentiality include circumstances mandated by law, such as instances of child abuse or suspected harm to self or others. Your therapist may consult with other professionals to support your process, ensuring your anonymity by altering identifying details. If you wish for your therapist to communicate with anyone outside the therapy room, written consent is required, and your therapist will determine if it aligns with your therapeutic progress.

Legal Exceptions to Confidentiality:

While confidentiality is upheld, therapists are mandated reporters of abuse or harm to self or others, as required by law. If you express suicidal or homicidal thoughts, your therapist will take necessary steps to prevent harm.

Regarding Homicidal Threats and Court Orders:

In the event of a homicidal threat, where there is a serious intention to harm another person(s), your therapist is obligated to contact 911 and make every effort to alert the intended victim(s). Furthermore, if a court issues an order to release records, such as in divorce or custody hearings, your therapist must comply with the court order and may be required to testify under oath, providing honest answers to all questions.



No Secrets Policy:

In couples and family therapy, the couple or family unit is considered the client, rather than individuals. Therefore, a no-secrets policy is implemented during marital/couples/family therapy sessions. This means that confidentiality does not extend to conversations between the couple or among family members when one member of the treatment unit requests an individual session or shares a secret with their therapist outside of the therapy session. Information disclosed in individual sessions may be shared with the other partner or family members, as deemed necessary to support the treatment unit's overall progress and goals. Each member of the treatment unit must complete and sign an intake form if seeking couples or family therapy.

Conjoint Sessions:

Occasionally, and only if it serves the client's therapy goals, your therapist may invite a family member or significant other to join you for a therapy session. This is done at the therapist's discretion and is intended to benefit the client. If the person joining the session is your significant other, it does not constitute couples therapy but rather aims to support your individual work. Additionally, the third party joining the session is not there for their own therapy, and your therapist at Doodlebug Counseling will not work with them as a therapist. If deemed beneficial, a written release of information is required for this type of conjoint session.

Sobriety Policy:

We require all clients, couples, families, and group members to attend therapy sessions sober, without the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. If intoxication is noticed by your therapist, the session will be promptly terminated, and assistance will be provided to arrange a safe ride home (via friend, family member, or taxi) as driving under the influence poses a risk to others and is a reportable offense. Once safely home, the therapy session will be rescheduled to address the occurrence. If you arrive intoxicated, you will be charged the full session fee.

Therapy Sessions:

Standard sessions are 60 minutes in duration and adhere to scheduled start and end times. Sessions take place in the office setting. While occasional lateness may occur, sessions will not



extend beyond the allotted 60 minutes or be compensated for at future sessions to maintain fairness to other clients.

Upon request, longer sessions are available. If sessions regularly exceed the standard duration, your therapist will address this in-session to maintain healthy boundaries around session timing. Rescheduling requires 24 hours' notice. Failure to attend appointments will result in being charged the full fee.

Non-Discrimination Policy:

At Doodlebug Counseling, we embrace diversity and support individuals of all ethnicities, cultures, orientations, and physical abilities. We welcome open discussions about any concerns regarding differences in race, religion, orientation, or gender between you and your therapist. These conversations foster trust and rapport. If you have questions about the therapeutic approach or non-discrimination policies, feel free to discuss them with your therapist.

Court Reports or Letters:

We do not provide legal letters or court reports for divorce, custody, or lawsuits. Letters pertaining to legal matters will not be written to outside individuals or agencies regarding your treatment, except for substance abuse assessment summaries and recommendations, sent to referring agencies.

If a court-mandated letter is necessary, written consent is required, and a fee of \$25.00 per page, in addition to our hourly fee, will be charged. We reserve the right to decline writing letters if it compromises therapeutic boundaries or places us in a dual relationship. In lawsuits, we do not advocate on your behalf or speak at court hearings, as this compromises confidentiality and the therapist-client relationship.

Court Fees:

In the event that you are involved in legal proceedings requiring your therapist's mandated participation, you are responsible for covering all professional time, including preparation, transportation, and attendance at legal proceedings, even if called to testify by another party. To



account for the time spent away from clinical work, you will be charged \$250 per hour for preparation, travel, and attendance. Additionally, any canceled client sessions due to legal obligations will be billed at the standard rate. It is important to note that therapists are not court advocates or friends; they are legally obligated to speak truthfully under oath.

Session Payments:

Therapy session payments can be made via cash, check, credit card, or debit card. Please complete the payment form in Vagaro, a link should be sent to you. Payments are processed on the day of the session. For clients preferring cash payments for confidentiality reasons, exact cash amounts for session fees are required. Charges for unpaid services may result in collection agency involvement, compromising confidentiality. Session payments are not carried over from week to week, and credit is not extended to avoid unethical debtor/creditor relationships that may impact the therapeutic dynamic.

Fee Increases:

Therapy fees are reviewed annually and may increase periodically. Client financial circumstances are carefully considered, and any fee increases will be discussed with a 30-day notice provided to clients prior to implementation.

Client Cancellation Procedures and Fees:

Short-Notice Cancellation: Any appointment canceled less than 24 hours before the scheduled time will incur the full agreed-upon fee for the session.

No-Show Policy: Failure to attend a scheduled appointment without prior cancellation will result in the full session fee being charged.

Group Therapy Commitment: Group therapy operates in 6-week modules, and clients are responsible for committing to the full module. Payment is due at the start of each module, and attendance is expected for all six sessions, as the spot is reserved for the client. Missing more than two sessions per module may result in being asked to leave the group.



Ongoing Cancellations or No-Shows: While occasional cancellations due to illness or emergencies are understandable, repeated cancellations, frequent reschedules, or missed appointments may prompt a discussion with your therapist. Failure to address attendance issues may lead to discontinuation of treatment.

Therapist Time Off Policy:

During scheduled out-of-office periods, your therapist will not be available for communication via phone, text, or email. In case of emergency, contact 911 immediately.

Holiday, Weekend, and Evening Contact:

Your therapist will endeavor to respond to calls, emails, or text messages within 24 hours during regular workdays. Messages received during holidays, weekends, or evenings will be addressed on the next business day. In life-threatening emergencies, contact 911 immediately.

Explanation of Dual Relationships:

Therapeutic relationships are professional and bound by important boundaries. Engaging in dual relationships, such as business ventures, personal favors, or social relationships, is considered unethical and may compromise clinical boundaries. While sessions may feel intimate psychologically, maintaining a strictly professional relationship is crucial. Therapists will maintain discretion in any chance encounters outside the office.

Policy Regarding Internet and Social Networking:

For privacy reasons, therapists do not accept friend or contact requests from clients on social networking sites. Social media interactions may compromise confidentiality and blur therapeutic boundaries. Contact between sessions should be done directly via email or phone.

Email Policy:



Emails should only be used for arranging or modifying appointments. Content related to therapy sessions should not be emailed as it may not be entirely secure or confidential. Emails become part of the client's legal and medical record.

Confidential Electronic Data Storage:

Client information is securely stored and protected to maintain confidentiality under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Physical Contact:

Sexual contact or inappropriate sexual behavior is never acceptable in the therapeutic relationship. Any sexual comments or jokes made by clients will be addressed professionally within the therapeutic context.

Referrals:

Client confidentiality is paramount, and referrals from current or former clients are appreciated. However, therapist-client relationships and clinical information will not be disclosed without written consent or legal mandate.