

## Client Agreement / Informed Consent

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**Overview of Services:** Counseling is a collaborative process between you and a counselor to work on areas of dissatisfaction in your life and assist you with life goals. For counseling to be most effective, it is important that you take an active role in the process. Counseling activities are governed by the Texas State Board of Examiners for Professional Counselors, the Texas State Board of Examiners of Marriage & Family Therapists, the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners, and the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists. Psychotherapy services are offered to individual adults, couples, families, and children, usually on a once-per-week basis.

Counseling and psychotherapy both refer to a supportive and guiding relationship with a professional practitioner who has undergone extensive training and personal exploration to understand the dynamics of human experience and psychological development. There are many different definitions and philosophies of psychotherapy, and each of our therapists will offer their own unique approach to treatment in unison with your goals, desires and preferences.

**Benefits:** A number of benefits are available from participating in psychotherapy. Often it is helpful just to know that someone understands. Therapy can provide a fresh perspective on a difficult problem or point you in the direction of a new solution. The benefits you obtain from therapy depend on how well you use the process and put into practice what you learn. Some of the benefits from therapy include: attaining a better understanding of yourself and your personal goals, developing skills for improving your relationships, overcoming specific problem areas such as depression and compulsive behaviors, and finding resolution to the concerns which led you to seek therapy. However, there are no guarantees about what therapy will do for you. Some people find that participating in psychotherapy results in changes that were not anticipated or intended at the outset.

**Risks:** There are certain risks associated with the counseling process that should be understood before work progresses. For example, in counseling, there is a risk that clients will, for a time, experience uncomfortable levels of sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other difficult feelings. Clients may recall unpleasant memories. Relationships are often affected as a result of therapy. Significant relationships may experience varying degrees of tension. This is often most prevalent within family relationships, but may extend beyond into one's social and professional life. Sometimes, a client's problems may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment. Most of these risks are to be expected when people are making significant changes in their lives. Finally, even with our best efforts, there is a risk that therapy may not yield the results that you initially desired from it.

**Confidentiality:** Psychotherapy, counseling, assessment, and associated services that are related to diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment services provided by licensed professionals are confidential and protected under Texas state law. The law protects the privacy of all communications between a client and a licensed professional. In most situations, information regarding your treatment can only be released to others with your written permission. However, there are legal limits to confidentiality and times when a licensed professional is obligated to disclose pertinent information, as necessary, to the appropriate authorities/agencies/individuals:

- If your therapist suspects that you pose a harm to yourself or others.
- If you report that a child, elderly person, or anyone else who cannot otherwise protect themselves has been or is being neglected, or physically or sexually abused.
- Ordered disclosure by state or federal courts.

Additional limits to confidentiality include:

- In the case of minors, parents or legal guardians have access to their child's records, unless emancipated.
- Family or group counseling is not legally private and can be subpoenaed.
- Provisionally-licensed therapists are required to discuss their cases with their supervisor, who is equally bound to protect client confidentiality.
- Therapists may, upon occasion, discuss their cases anonymously with peer professionals for the sole purpose of improving the quality of services provided to the related client.

Client records may be accessed by clinic staff exclusively to the degree necessary to perform their professional responsibilities regarding basic intake, scheduling, and billing. Furthermore, for those clients who use an EAP or insurance to pay for all or part of treatment, information regarding diagnosis and treatment must be shared with their representative. You are protected under the provisions of the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which insures the confidentiality of all electronic information about you. When communicating with your therapist or Plumeria Counseling Center via email, it is necessary to understand that email is not completely confidential. All emails are retained in the logs of the 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.

**Therapeutic Relationship:** The client-therapist relationship is a purely professional one in which appropriate boundaries must be maintained, despite the fact that close emotional bonds may develop over the course of treatment. Although this is sometimes difficult to understand, it is a necessary requirement for maintenance of the therapeutic environment. As such, your therapist cannot be expected to be involved in a social relationship or friendship of any kind that exists outside of the therapy room.

**Time Parameters:** Appointments are scheduled for 50-minute segments. Being late for an appointment will count against this allotted duration and the session will conclude at its normal stopping time. In certain cases, most often with couples or family counseling, sessions may be scheduled for 80-minute or 110-minute segments, as determined by you and your therapist during the initial consultation.

**Fees:** Counseling services at Plumeria Counseling Center are performed by both fully licensed professionals and provisionally-licensed professionals (Interns). All interns have completed a master's degree program in their related field and are currently completing the clinical hours required for full licensure by their respective board of examiners. Fees for each are as follows:

- Professionals: \$90/50-minute session; sliding scale of \$20-\$90; insurance or EAP
- Interns: \$70/50-minute session; sliding scale of \$20-\$70; private-pay only

**Sliding Scale:** In cases of financial hardship, each therapist may agree to reduce their rate for providing counseling services but is not required to do so. This matter should be discussed between you and your therapist during your initial consultation and a reasonable fee mutually agreed upon prior to contracting for therapy.

**Initial Consultations:** Initial consultations are offered free-of-charge and are optional for all prospective, private-pay clients meeting with either professional or intern therapists. The initial consultation is an opportunity to investigate therapy as an option, meet a therapist, discuss your therapeutic goals, and contract for therapy should you and your therapist agree that an effective alliance can be formed. Formal therapy is not conducted during an initial consultation. As such, a consultation is not suitable for those seeking immediate counseling.

**Payment:** Payment is due at time of service delivery. If payment cannot be made for the current appointment, arrangements must be made for payment to occur by the end of the following appointment. If payment for the current appointment is not made by the end of the following appointment, sessions may be suspended until payment is made. If more than one-session-delinquent with regard to fee payment, termination or suspension of services may result. A service charge of \$25 will be charged for each check returned to Plumeria Counseling Center.

**Cancellation:** Sessions must be cancelled with at least 24-hour advance notice to either your therapist or Plumeria Counseling Center to avoid penalty. Clients will be financially responsible for the full fee for any session cancelled with less than 24 hours notice or missed without prior notification (no-show).

**Termination:** Counseling is voluntary. Both you and your therapist reserve the right to transfer/terminate services at any time, for any reason.

**Continuation of Care:** In the event that termination occurs prior to the completion of client-stated goals, the therapist agrees to make reasonable efforts to ensure the client's continuation of care by making appropriate referrals to no fewer than three (3) alternative counseling sources, taking into adequate consideration the client's psychological needs and ability to pay. Such referral will be made in writing and sent to the client's address on record.

**Grievance/Complaint:** You have the right to file a confidential grievance if you have an unresolved concern regarding your therapy/therapist, or any issue involving any representative of Plumeria Counseling Center. Any grievance should be in written form and addressed to: Clinical Director, Plumeria Counseling Center, 2501 W. Cannon Dr., Building Six, Austin, TX 78745.

To file a complaint against a licensed professional or post-graduate intern, you may also contact the appropriate licensing board listed below:

- Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors: (512) 834-6658
- Texas State Board of Examiners of Marriage & Family Therapists: (512) 834-6657
- Texas State Board of Examiners of Social Worker Examiners: (512) 834-6677
- Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists: (512) 305-7709

**Emergency/After-Hours:** If you have a life-threatening crisis, please call 9-1-1. Most hospital emergency rooms can give life-saving services. Help is also available 24hrs at the Crisis Hotline (472-HELP) or Psychiatric Emergency Services (454-3521). Plumeria Counseling Services is not equipped to be of service after normal business hours.

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I have read, understood, agree, and consent to the conditions of service stated in this agreement. I have also received the notice of privacy practices on this date and have had the opportunity to ask questions about and understand these policies.

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Signature of Client

Printed Name

Date

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Signature of Client

Printed Name

Date

(\*\*For Minors Only)

I hereby grant permission to Plumeria Counseling Center to counsel/assess my child, \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Child's First/Last Name*

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Signature of Guardian

Guardian's Printed Name

Date