

**Kenneth L. Larson, Ph.D.**  
Valley Psychological Center  
1891 E. Roseville Parkway, Suite 100  
Roseville, CA 91661  
(916) 789-7082 x.302

## **OUTPATIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT FOR COLLATERALS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

I want to thank you for agreeing to assist in friends or family member's psychotherapeutic treatment. Your participation is important, and is sometimes essential to the success of the treatment. This document is to inform you about the risks, rights and responsibilities that come with your participation as a collateral participant.

### **WHO IS A COLLATERAL?**

A collateral is usually a spouse, family member, or friend, who participates in therapy to assist the identified patient. The collateral is not considered to be a patient and is not the subject of the treatment. While Psychologists have certain legal and ethical responsibilities to patients, these same considerations are not extended to collateral participants to the same degree that they are extended to patients. Throughout your participation in treatment it is important that you bear in minds that my primary responsibility is to my patient and I will place their interests first.

### **THE ROLE OF COLLATERALS IN THERAPY**

The role of a collateral varies greatly from case to case and session to session. For example, a collateral might attend only one session, either alone or with the patient, to provide information to the therapist and never attend another session. In another case a collateral might attend all of the patient's therapy sessions and his/her relationship with the patient may be a focus of the treatment. We will discuss your specific role in the treatment at our first meeting and other appropriate times.

### **BENEFITS AND RISKS**

Psychotherapy often engenders intense emotional experiences, and your participation may engender strong anxiety or emotional distress. It may also expose or create tension in your relationship with the patient. While your participation can result in better understanding of the patient or an improved relationship, or may even help in your own growth and development, there is no guarantee that this will be the case. Psychotherapy is a positive experience for many, but it is not helpful to all people.

### **MEDICAL RECORDS**

No record or chart will be maintained on you in your role as a collateral. Notes about you may be entered into the identified patient's chart. The patient has a right to access the chart and the material contained therein. It is sometimes possible to maintain the privacy of our communications. If that is your wish, we should discuss it before any information is communicated. Unless the patient is your child and a minor or has been deemed to be incompetent by a court of law and you have been named as their conservator, you have no right to access that chart without the written consent of patient. You will not be diagnosed by the therapist, and the therapist will not be developing an individualized treatment plan for you.

### **FEES**

As a collateral you are not responsible for paying for my professional services unless you are financially responsible for the patient.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The confidentiality of information in the patient's chart, including the information that you provide me, is protected by both federal and state law. It can only be released if the identified patient specifically authorizes me to do so. There are some exceptions to this general rule:

- If I suspect you are abusing or neglecting a child or a vulnerable adult, I am required to file a report with the appropriate agency.
- If I believe that you are a danger to yourself (suicidal) I will take actions to protect your life even if I must reveal your identity to do so.
- If you threaten serious bodily harm to another I will take necessary actions to protect that person even if I must reveal your identity to do so.
- If you, or the patient, is involved in a lawsuit, and a court requires that I submit information or testify, I must comply
- If insurance is used to pay for the treatment, the clients insurance company may require me to submit information about the treatment for claims processing purposes or for utilization review.

You are expected to maintain the confidentiality of the patient (your spouse, friend, or child) in your role as a collateral. This means that by signing this document, you agree to not discuss the information that is pasted between you and the therapist with anyone other than the therapist and/or the patient. If a situation arises in which it is in the patient's best interest to share some or all of the information past between you and the therapist, you will seek and secure the patient's permission to share that information prior any disclosure to an outside third party.

### **DO COLLATERALS EVER BECOME A FORMAL PATIENT?**

Collaterals may discuss their own problems in therapy, especially problems that interact with issues of the patient. The therapist may recommend formal therapy for a collateral. These are some examples of when this might occur.

- It becomes evident that a collateral is in need of mental health services. In this circumstance the collateral needs to have a clinician, diagnosis, and chart records kept.
- Parents, being seen as collaterals as their child is being treated, need couples therapy to improve their relationship so they can function effectively as parents.

Most often, but not always, the clinician will refer you to another clinician for treatment in these situations. There are two reasons the referral may be necessary:

- Seeing two members of the same family, or close friends, may result in a dual role, and potentially cloud the clinician's judgment. Making a referral helps prevent this from happening.
- The clinician must keep a focus on the original primary task of treatment for the patient. For example, if the clinician started treating a child's behavioral problem, then takes on couple's therapy with mom and dad to address their relationship problems, the original focus of therapy with the child may be lost. A referral helps the clinician to stay focused.

### **RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

The identified patient is not required to sign an authorization to release information (Authorization Form) to the collateral when a collateral participates in therapy. The presence of the collateral with the consent of the patient is adequate; however it is my practice to require such an authorization. This provides some assurance that full consent has been given to the clinician for the patient's confidential information to be discussed with the collateral in therapy. The Authorization Form is also helpful to the clinician on those occasions when receiving a telephone call from a collateral or when the clinician calls a collateral for one reason or another. In most instances the clinician cannot take a call from a collateral without an Authorization Form.

### **PARENTS AS COLLATERALS**

Clinicians specializing in the treatment of children have long recognized the need to treat children in the context of their family. Participation of parents, siblings, and sometimes extended family members, is common and often recommended. Parents in particular have more rights and responsibilities in their role as a collateral than in other treatment situations where the identified patient is not a minor.

- In treatment involving children and their parents, access to information is an important and sometimes contentious topic. Particularly for older children, trust and privacy are crucial to treatment success. But parents also need to know certain information about the treatment. For this reason, we need to

discuss and agree about what information will be shared and what information will remain private. I generally require a written contract signed by both you and your child/children concerning access to a child's record and once that contract is made, I will treat it as legally binding, although it sometimes may be overridden by a judge. In general, I believe that parents should be informed about the goals of treatment and how the treatment is going and whether the child comes to his/her appointments. In addition, I will always inform you if I think that your child is in danger or if he/she is endangering others. One of our first tasks is to discuss and agree on our shared definition of dangerousness so we are all clear about what will be disclosed.

- If you are participating in therapy with your child, you should expect the clinician to request that you examine your own attitudes and behaviors to determine if you can make positive changes that will be of benefit to your child.

**SUMMARY**

If you have questions about therapy, my procedures, or your role in this process, please discuss them with me. By signing below you indicate that you have read this document and have had any questions concerning the information contained in this document answered.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Patient

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to Patient