

## **Informed Consent Information**

### **For In-office counseling sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

It is no secret that there is a pandemic and important to understand that all of our activities, now, should take into account the risks and benefits entailed. In-person counseling has advantages over distance counseling done by telephone or by face-time platforms, but in-person counseling also entails risks that are avoidable. By agreeing to work in-person you also agree that you understand the risks and accept those risks.

The COVID-19 virus often comes with no symptoms at all, but it can also be a very serious illness that may require medical treatment and in some cases, hospitalization. People may have the illness and not know they have it, but still transmit the illness to others – who may suffer a more serious episode of the illness.

Our office will exercise as much care as is reasonably possible by the following steps, but your own safety and others' safety will require you to exercise similar care, as well:

1. We will attempt to schedule appointments ways that will minimize your contact with others. When you come to our office please maintain six feet of space between yourself and others in the waiting room, hallway and individual offices.
2. Between appointments, we will do our best to disinfect the office. No effort to disinfect an office space can be perfect. You can be safer and make others safer by not touching anything in the office that you do not need to touch.
3. In that same vein, your child should bring her or his own toys to use in the play therapy rather than to use the toys in our office.
4. To the greatest extent possible everyone should wear a mask – masks are for others' protection, not our own, and everyone should maintain social distance whenever in the office or the building.
5. If you, or if anyone in your family has any symptoms of the virus, you should notify us immediately, and you should cancel appointments, and not come to the office. There is a list of the symptoms offered by the CDC which has been posted in the suite. If you do have symptoms we can continue to provide virtual services for you..
6. If some person comes into our office and is soon found to be infected with the virus, we may be contacted by the health authorities for possible contact tracing. If the affected person was in the office during or immediately before you were, we will feel obligated to provide your name to the contact tracing effort. We will not provide any other information. Indeed, we will not even explain the reason you were present; for the purpose of contact tracing it does not matter if you were a patient, a staffer, a bill collector, or a delivery person. Your signature below confirms that you understand this new limitation on patient privacy that the pandemic makes necessary.

We remain committed to following any other state and federal guidelines and to adhering to prevailing professional healthcare standards to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in our offices, recognizing that these guidelines change from time to time. Despite our careful attention to sanitization, social distancing, and other protocols, there is still a chance that you will be exposed to COVID-19 in our office.

We believe it should be your decision whether to participate in counseling in person or by teletherapy.. Our office will provide either form of counseling for you. By coming to our office, you agree, you understand, and you accept the risks entailed. You agree to cooperate with our efforts to protect you, to protect others, and to protect ourselves and our staff, by following safe practices including the steps listed above. You have had an opportunity to ask any questions and your questions have been answered.

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Client (or responsible parent signature)

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Date

**The information below is from the website of the Mayo Clinic:<sup>1</sup>**

The signs and symptoms of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may appear two to 14 days after exposure. This time after exposure and before having symptoms is called the incubation period. Common signs and symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

Other symptoms can include:

- Tiredness
- Aches
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Loss of smell
- Loss of taste
- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Severe vomiting

Any symptoms you have might not seem severe, but the severity of symptoms is not an indicator of whether you can pass the virus to others. According to the CDC, if you have any of the symptoms in the first list, above, or two or more of the symptoms in the second list, contact our office and cancel your appointments until you can be tested and know whether you are at risk. Your counseling can continue by distance means.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/symptoms-causes/syc-20479963>