

Prairie Girl Group

Informed Consent for Therapy Agreement

Please read through the following informed consent agreement. What follows is a basic understanding between client and therapist. In general, what are listed below are the responsibilities and obligations of your therapist, and some expectations of you as the client.

This document also contains important information about our professional services and business policies. Do not sign the informed consent unless you completely understand and agree to all aspects. If you have any questions, please let me know. We can go through the document in as much detail as is needed for you be comfortable.

When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Thank you,



Stacy Cahalan, LPC, NCC

Licensed Professional Counselor (KS), Nationally Certified Counselor, Licensed School Counselor (KS)

A few practice-keeping notes that will save us both a lot of future conversations:

- Therapeutic focus: **teens and their families**
- When the weather cooperates, I prefer to host therapy sessions outside
- Office hours: **evenings and weekends**
- **I do not accept insurance** but happy to provide documentation and receipts for insurance/Health Savings Account submission
- After intake and informed consent forms are complete, 15-20 minute intake conversations: **\$50**
- 50-minute therapy appointments: **\$140**
- 90-minute group sessions: **\$80**
- Current payment method: **cash, check, Venmo or PayPal**

Therapy

- **Voluntary Participation:** All clients voluntarily agree to treatment, and accordingly may terminate any time without penalty. Counseling involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be thoughtful about the therapist you select. In the first couple of sessions, you should be deciding whether I am a good fit for you. If you feel it is not a good match, then let's chat and we can work on a referral.
- **Client Involvement:** All clients are expected to show up to appointments on time, prepared to focus on and discuss therapy goals and issues, and will not attend while under the influence of mood-altering chemicals. All clients are expected to be open and honest so your therapist can assist you with your goals. Counseling is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. For therapy to be most successful, you are encouraged to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Attendance & Engagement

- **Therapist Involvement:** Your therapist will be prepared at the designated time, (barring emergencies), and will be attentive and supportive in meeting the therapy goals and do everything possible to assist you in achieving a greater sense of self-awareness and work toward helping you resolve problem areas.
- **Guarantees:** Although most people do get better in therapy, some do get worse. Accordingly, your therapist makes no guarantee of results. It is not possible to guarantee results such as: becoming happier, saving marriages, stopping drug abuse, becoming less depressed, and so forth.
- **Risks of Therapy:** Just as medications sometimes causes unexpected side effects, counseling can stimulate painful memories, unanticipated changes in your life, and uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. In some cases, client's symptoms become worse during the course of therapy, occasionally necessitating hospitalization. Another risk of therapy is that throughout the process of therapeutic change it is not uncommon for clients to reach a point of change where they may feel they are different and no longer able to be the same person they were upon entering therapy. At times these feelings can be unsettling.
- **Benefits of Therapy:** The benefits of therapy can include: a higher level of functional coping, solutions to specific problems, new insights into self, more effective means of communicating in relationships, symptomatic relief, and improved self-esteem.
- **Alternatives to Traditional Therapy:** can include: stress management, twelve step programs, peer self-help groups, bibliotherapy, and support groups.
- **Credentials and Qualifications:** Stacy Cahalan, Prairie Girl Group, is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Nationally Certified Counselor and Licensed Professional Counselor. She has a Master's in Science degree in Counseling.
- **Counseling Approach & Theory:** Your therapist generally uses a therapy approach that includes a Cognitive Behavioral and Humanistic orientation to counseling. Your counselor focuses largely upon client responsibility in therapy, building a relationship

with clients, creating a nurturing environment conducive to change, exploration of past events and how they continue to affect you today, analysis of underlying belief systems and their relation to inadequate functioning or hindrance to change, and implementation of specific emotional, cognitive, and behavioral techniques designed to aid in change toward specified goals.

- **Colleague Consultation:** In keeping with standards of practice, your therapist may consult with other mental health professionals regarding care and management of cases. The purpose of this consultation is to ensure quality of care. Your therapist will maintain complete confidentiality and protect your identity by not using real names or any identifying information.
- **Meetings and Length of Therapy:** Once we have agreed to work together, we will usually schedule one appointment every 1-2 weeks at a time we can agree upon. Session length will be around 50 minutes. Because our meetings are your time, you are expected to come to each session with a sense of what it is you would like to discuss or work on during that session. Length of therapy is quite variable based on client motivation, number and severity of issues to resolve, and work efforts outside of therapy sessions. On average, many people feel they have obtained what they were looking for in 10-25 sessions. For some it is fewer and for others it may go longer.
- **Young Children in the Waiting Area:** We are not able to assume responsibility for the care of young children during therapy sessions. Having young children is generally disruptive to the counseling process, and we ask that you arrange for their care so you may come alone. If you have difficulty arranging childcare elsewhere, please talk with your therapist. Children old enough to be responsible for themselves may wait in the reception area.
- **Confidentiality and Privilege:** The information and content shared in therapy will remain confidential, except as noted in the next section: Exceptions to Confidentiality and Privilege. Your information will not be shared with anyone without your written consent. Your information is also privileged, which means that your therapist is free from the duty to speak in court about your counseling unless you waive that right, or a judge orders it.
- **Exceptions to Confidentiality and Privilege:** As a mandated reporter in the state of Kansas, your therapist is legally obligated to violate confidentiality under the following circumstances:
 - When the therapist has reason to suspect that the client has been, or is currently, involved in the abuse or neglect of a child
 - When the therapist has reason to suspect that the client has been, or is currently, involved, in the abuse or neglect of vulnerable adults
 - If a client is pregnant and taking street drugs
 - If the client reports sexual misconduct by another counselor
 - If a client is a serious danger to themselves, i.e., if suicidal
 - If a client is a serious danger to someone else, i.e., if homicidal
 - If the courts order copies of records

- Another time when confidentiality has limitations is for minor clients. Parents and guardians have legal right to access a minor client's records
- Minor clients do have the rights to complete confidentiality in obtaining counseling for pregnancies and associated conditions, sexually transmitted diseases, and information about alcohol or drug abuse.
- **Custody Issues & Therapy for Minors:** Where legal custody is split (joint) between parents or guardians who are no longer married or cohabiting, we need authorization and signature from both parents on our Informed Consent and Confidentiality Notice prior to the child being seen. These forms can be downloaded from our website and completed prior to arrival.
- **Ethical Guidelines:** Your counselor follows the American Psychological Association (APA) ethical guidelines, as well as those rules dictated in the [Kansas Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board](#) (KSBRB).
- **Medical Records:** The laws and standards of our profession require that we keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of the records unless we believe that seeing them would be emotionally damaging, in which case we will send them to a mental health professional of your choosing. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. We recommend you review them in your therapist's presence so we can discuss the contents. All client records include: a data sheet filled out prior to therapy, a chronological listing of appointments and fees, a copy of signed releases, copies of any correspondence regarding your case, a copy of the signed informed consent packet materials, and a copy of all therapist notes. All records will be maintained by your therapist in a secured area for a period of seven years from the time of service termination. As a client you have a right to access your records. You also have a right to contest material in your records and it will be duly noted in your record. You do not have a right to alter your records or dictate information to be removed. You have the right to access and view your record, but you do not own the records, they are property of Prairie Girl Group.
- **Counseling and Records for Minors:** If you are under 18 years of age, please be aware that the law provides your parents the right to review your treatment records as well as obtain information from us about your diagnosis, progress, and treatment. It is our policy to request an agreement from parents that they agree to avoid unnecessary review of records and involvement in your treatment with us. If they agree, we will only provide them 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.
- **Disputes and Complaints:** We encourage all disputes and complaints to go directly to Prairie Girl Group first. If these disputes or complaints cannot be resolved by between the client and Prairie Girl Group, all other complaints can be sent directly to [Kansas Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board](#) (KSBRB).
- **Professional Fees:** Prior to all therapy sessions beginning, there will be an intake form required and an intake session with a fee. After the intake session, normal counseling sessions will begin at a cadence that works for both client and therapist. You can see up to date fees at <https://www.prairiegirlgroup.com>.

- **Health Insurance:** At this time Prairie Girl Group does not accept insurance. We are happy to provide you with digital documentation that allows you to submit claims on your own or use your Health Savings Account, if applicable.
- **Phone Availability:** We are often not immediately available by phone. Because of other obligations, we are currently only returning phone calls in the evening. We will also not answer the phone when we are with a client. When we are unavailable, you are able to leave us a voice message and we will make every effort to return your call the same day you have called, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, we encourage you to leave us times when you will be available.
- **Emergency & Interruption of Therapy:** In the event of any mental health or substance abuse emergency, we encourage you call 911. When we are on vacation or plan to be unavailable for a brief period of time, we will provide you with the name and number of another therapist you can contact with questions or come in to see as needed. In the event of a longer interruption of therapy we will make appropriate referrals as needed.
- **Termination:** Either the client or the therapist may end therapy at any time. Your voluntary involvement allows you to discontinue at any time. If your therapist feels you are no longer benefiting from therapy or your therapist feels there is a conflict in values they may discuss termination. If you desire additional counseling your therapist will provide you with a referral competent to address your issues.

Financial Agreement and Terms

- **Billing and Payments:** You will be expected to pay for each session at the beginning of the session. We accept cash, check, Venmo or PayPal at this time.
- **Cancellation, No Show or Late Arrival:** In general, all clients must provide the therapist a minimum of 24 hours' notice in the event of a cancellation, which does not include weekends. This means if you have an appointment at 1:00pm on Monday, you will need to have cancelled by 1:00pm on the Friday prior. Clients will be charged for appointments that are not canceled at least 24 hours in advance and for all no shows. Insurance companies do not pay for missed appointments, therefore, you will be responsible for the full amount charged. Clients arriving late will not be provided an extension of time beyond what they were scheduled so as not to disrupt other client appointments. No reduction in fees will result from shortened sessions due to a client's late arrival. Additionally, if a client misses two appointments, your therapist has the option to terminate services and refer you to another clinic for services.
- **Account Balance Maximum:** Whenever a client's account reaches an outstanding balance of \$500 and no payments have been made or received toward the account, additional counseling services will be suspended. Services will remain suspended until client begins making payment toward their account. If no payments are made, services will remain suspended and/or clients may be referred to alternate providers for services.
- **Collections:** If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, we have the option of using legal means to secure payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. In most collection situations, the only information released regarding a client's treatment is his/her name, the nature of the services provided, and the amount due. Accounts turned

over to collections may be subject to future requirements such as providing a retainer for future services.

I am over 18 years old and with this signature, understand and agree with everything in this informed consent document.

Signature:

Printed name:

I am signing this as a parent or guardian to: