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MW COUNSELING

ADDENDUM CONSENT FOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO A MINOR

Child's Name

Date of Birth

Prior to beginning treatment, it is important for everyone to understand your child's therapist's approach to providing services to children and adolescents, and to agree to some rules about your child's confidentiality during the course of his or her treatment. The information herein is in addition to the information contained in the Informed Consent for Therapy, Notice of Privacy Practices, and Practice Policies forms.

Authorization for Minor's Mental Health Treatment

In order to authorize mental health treatment for your child, you must have either sole or joint legal custody of your child and be authorized to grant permission for medical treatment.

Whenever possible, it is advisable for both parents or legal guardians to be present during a child's first intake session.

Divorce

MW Counseling does not provide custody evaluations or recommendations, medication or prescription recommendations, or legal advice, as these activities do not fall within the scope of the practice or expertise. Additionally, both parents of minors in treatment are entitled to information about the progress of their child. If there are unique custodial issues relevant to your minor, please advise your therapist prior to your child beginning therapy. Parenting plans and custody agreement documentation is required before or at the time of the first session. Additionally, joint decision-making requires both parents to consent to treatment and complete the required paperwork prior to MW Counseling seeing the minor child.

MW Counseling provides counseling for children and their families. It is our policy not to accept, as clients, children whose families are engaged in custody litigation. We do not provide child custody psychological or family evaluations for the purpose of litigation. We do not supervise visitations. We do not serve as court advisors. We do not provide legal child advocate services. We will be happy to refer you to another provider if necessary.

If you are separated or divorced from the other parent of your child, please notify your child's therapist immediately. Your child's therapist will ask you to provide a copy of the most recent custody decree that establishes custody rights of you and the other parent or otherwise demonstrates that you have the right to authorize treatment for your child.

If you are separated or divorced from the child's other parent, please be aware that it is MW Counseling's policy to notify the other parent that he or she is meeting with your child. If there is joint custody, the signature of **both** parents will be required. Regardless of the custodial arrangement, consent from both parents is the preferred practice of MW Counseling.

One risk of child therapy involves disagreement among parents and/or disagreement between parents and the therapist regarding the child's treatment. If such disagreements occur, your child's therapist will strive to listen carefully so that he or she can understand your perspectives and fully explain his or her perspective. You and the therapist can resolve such disagreements, or you can agree to disagree, so long as this enables your child's therapeutic progress.

Individual Parent/Guardian Communications with Treating Professional

If you are a parent and your child is in therapy with MW Counseling, you are asked to please be available at the end of each session for occasional updates.

If your session occurs via Telehealth, you are asked to be available by phone throughout the entire session as if you are in the waiting room. This is to ensure safety of your child, and that technological or other issues can be addressed as quickly as possible and therapy can continue with as little interruption as possible. Additionally, in order for therapy to operate smoothly through Telehealth for your child, we ask you to prepare/set up for the session in advance. This may include setting up laptop/tablet, checking audio/video connection, choosing toys/art supplies with your child to play with during the session, and setting up a designated space/play area so the therapist can see the child at all times during the session.

In the course of the treatment of your child, the therapist may meet with the child's parents or guardians either separately or together. Please be aware, however, that, at all times, your child's therapist's client is your child – not the parents or guardians nor any siblings or other family members of the child.

If your child's therapist meets with you or other family members in the course of your child's treatment, the therapist will make notes of that meeting in your child's treatment records. Please be aware that those notes will be available to any person or entity that has legal access to your child's treatment record.

Mandatory Disclosures of Treatment Information

In some situations, your child's therapist is required by law or by the guidelines of his or her profession to disclose information, whether or not he or she has your or your child's permission. Your child's therapist will disclose information when:

- Minor clients tell the therapist that they plan to cause serious harm or death to themselves, and the therapist believes that the minor has the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. The therapist must take steps to inform a parent or guardian or others of what the child has said and how serious he or she believes this threat to be and to try to prevent the occurrence of such harm.

- Minor clients tell the therapist that they plan to cause serious harm or death to someone else, and the therapist believes the minor has the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. In this situation, the therapist must inform a parent or guardian or others and may be required to inform the person who is the target of the threatened harm as well as the police.
- The therapist may call the police where the client lives, if the therapist believes there is an imminent risk of harm to the client or another.
- Minor clients are doing things that could cause serious harm to themselves or someone else, even if they do not intend to harm themselves or another person. In these situations, the therapist will need to use his or her professional judgment to decide whether a parent or guardian should be informed.
- Minor clients tell their therapist, or the therapist otherwise learns that, it appears that a child, including the client, is being neglected or abused--physically, sexually or emotionally--or that it appears that they have been neglected or abused in the past. In this situation, the therapist is required by law to report the alleged abuse to the appropriate state child-protective agency.
- The therapist is ordered by a court to disclose information.

Disclosure of Minor's Treatment Information to Parents/Guardians

Therapy is most effective when a trusting relationship exists between the therapist and the client. Privacy is especially important in earning and keeping that trust. As a result, it is important for children to have a "zone of privacy" where children feel free to discuss personal matters without fear that their thoughts and feelings will be immediately communicated to their parents/guardians. This is particularly true for adolescents who are naturally developing a greater sense of independence and autonomy.

It is MW Counseling's policy for your child's therapist to provide you with general information about your child's treatment, but NOT to share specific information your child has disclosed to their therapist without your child's agreement. This includes activities and behavior that you may not approve of, or might be upset by, but that do not put your child at risk of serious and immediate harm. However, if your child's risk-taking behavior becomes more serious, then your child's therapist will need to use his or her professional judgment to decide whether your child is in serious and immediate danger of harm. If the therapist feels that your child is in such danger, the therapist will communicate this information to you.

For example, if your child tells the therapist that he or she has tried alcohol at a few parties, the therapist would keep this information confidential. Alternatively, if your child tells the therapist that he or she is drinking and driving or is a passenger in a car with a driver who is drunk, your child's therapist would not keep this information confidential from you.

Another example would be if your child tells the therapist that he or she is having voluntary, protected, sex with a peer, the therapist would keep this information confidential. On the other hand, if your child

tells the therapist that, on several occasions, the child has engaged in unprotected sex with strangers or in unsafe situations, the therapist will not keep this information confidential.

You can always ask the therapist questions about the types of information he or she would disclose. You can ask in the form of “hypothetical situations,” such as: “If a child told you that he or she were doing _____, would you tell the parents?”

Even when you and your child’s therapist have agreed to keep your child’s treatment information confidential from you, the therapist may believe that it is important for you to know about a particular situation that is going on in your child’s life. In these situations, the therapist will encourage your child to tell you, and the therapist will help your child find the best way to do so. Also, when meeting with you, your child’s therapist may sometimes describe your child’s problems in general terms, without using specifics, in order to help you know how to be more helpful to your child.

From time to time it may be necessary or beneficial for you as a parent(s) or guardian(s) to participate in therapy with your child. It may also be necessary or beneficial to conduct parenting session(s): a session without your child present. Your therapist will utilize these tools in their discretion consistent with the privacy considerations described herein.

Disclosure of Minor’s Treatment Records to Parents/Guardians

Clients under 18 years of age who are not emancipated, and their parents/guardians, should be aware that the law may allow parents/guardians to examine their child’s treatment records. Because privacy in psychotherapy is often crucial to successful progress, particularly with teenagers, MW Counseling typically requests that parents/guardians respect their children’s privacy. MW Counseling typically provides parents with general information about the progress of the child’s treatment and general issues being addressed.

Parent/Guardian Agreement Not to Use Minor’s Therapy Information/Records in Custody Litigation

When a family is in conflict, particularly conflict due to parental separation or divorce, it is very difficult for everyone, particularly for children. Although your child’s therapist’s responsibility to your child may require that he or she is helping to address conflicts between the child’s parents, the therapist’s role will be strictly limited to providing treatment to your child. If you become involved in the legal system (divorce, custody, civil litigation, criminal activity, etc.) MW Counseling will not make recommendations, testify, or become otherwise involved in such legal activities. If you need an evaluation for a legal purpose, MW Counseling will make a referral to an outside, unbiased professional who can perform this service.

In signing this agreement, you agree that you will not call your child’s therapist or MW Counseling as a witness to testify or to expect recommendations or other involvement in your legal activities. You agree that in any child custody or visitation proceedings, neither of you will seek to ask your child’s therapist to testify in court, whether in person or by affidavit, or to provide letters or documentation expressing his or her opinion about parental fitness, custody, or visitation arrangements.

Please note that your agreement may not prevent a judge from requiring the therapist's testimony, even though the therapist will not do so unless legally compelled. If your therapist is required to testify, he or she is ethically bound not to give his or her opinion about either parent's custody, visitation suitability, or fitness. If the court appoints a custody evaluator, guardian *ad litem*, or parenting coordinator, the therapist will provide information as needed, if appropriate releases are signed or a court order is provided. However, the therapist will not make any recommendation about the final decision(s).

Parent/Guardian of Minor Client

Please initial after each line and sign below, indicating your agreement to respect your child's privacy.

I will refrain from requesting detailed information about individual therapy sessions with my child. I understand that I will be provided with periodic updates about general progress, and/or may be asked to participate in therapy sessions as needed.

Although I may have the legal right to request written records/session notes since my child is a minor, I agree NOT to request these records in order to respect the confidentiality of my child's/adolescent's treatment.

I understand that I will be informed about situations that could endanger my child. I know this decision to breach confidentiality in these circumstances is up to the therapist's professional judgment, unless otherwise noted above.

I, _____, am the legal custodial parent/guardian of _____ and give my permission to MW Counseling to provide mental health services to my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

I, _____, am the legal custodial parent/guardian of _____ and give my permission to MW Counseling to provide mental health services to my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date