



SERVICES AGREEMENT (Effective: 01-01-09)

This document contains important information about our professional services and business policies at MidStep. It is crucial that you thoroughly read and understand this Agreement, *and the accompanying Privacy Notice*, as required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). HIPAA is a federal law that provides privacy protections and patient rights with regard to the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI). The law requires that we obtain your signature acknowledging that we provided you with this information at the first appointment. We can discuss any questions you have about the procedures at that time. **When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and your doctor. Your signature signifies your consent to participate in services at MidStep in accordance with the following description of psychological services and business practices.**

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: MidStep Child Development Center seeks to promote the emotional well-being of children, adolescents, and families. We provide a range of psychological services including evaluations, consultations, and psychotherapy (individual, family and group).

The nature of psychotherapy varies depending on the personalities of the doctor and patient, and the particular problems the patient is experiencing. There are many different methods we may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on the part of the patient and his/her family. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you and/or your child will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy has been shown to have many benefits. Therapy often leads to reduced feelings of distress, better relationships, and solutions to specific problems. Of course, there are no guarantees of what you will experience, and there are some risks, such as having uncomfortable thoughts or feelings while discussing unpleasant aspects of your life. The majority of our patients, however, report positive experiences and outcomes with their treatment.

Our first few sessions will include an evaluation of your needs. A patient's well-being is determined by a number of different factors. Accordingly, our first goal is to determine the specific factors that are influencing a patient's functioning at any given time. During the initial assessment phase of treatment, your doctor will typically use clinical interviews, observations, and standardized questionnaires with relevant family members in order to best understand the presenting problems or concerns. Additional psychological testing may be recommended to address certain referral questions. In addition, as part of the initial assessment your doctor will often wish to gather information from other professionals involved in your child's life, such as school staff or physicians. The decision to communicate with these professionals would be discussed with you and written consent to communicate with them would be obtained prior to there being any contact. Once the clinical assessment is completed, specific treatment recommendations will be discussed with you in a feedback session. A treatment plan will be developed together and reviewed together periodically.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ITS LIMITATIONS

1. The law protects the privacy of all communications between a patient and a doctor. In most situations, MidStep can only release information about your treatment to others if you sign a specific written Authorization form that meets certain legal requirements imposed by HIPAA.

2. There are other situations that only require you to provide written, advance consent for us to use or disclose any protected health information (PHI) from your Clinical Record. Your signature on the Consent Form provides consent for those activities, including:

- You should be aware that your doctor works in an office with other mental health professionals and administrative staff. Certain protected information may be shared with these individuals for both clinical and administrative purposes, such as billing. Post-doctoral psychology residents must be supervised by licensed psychologists, and therefore information gathered during assessment and treatment will be shared between residents and supervisors to ensure quality services. All mental health professionals at MidStep are bound by the same rules of confidentiality. All staff members have been given training about protecting your privacy and have agreed not to release any information outside of the practice without prior permission.
- MidStep also has ongoing contacts with business associates such as our attorney, accountant, computer consultant, and collection agency. As required by HIPAA, we have a formal business associate contract with these businesses, in which they promise to maintain the confidentiality of any PHI data, except as otherwise required by law.
- Disclosures required by health insurers (as discussed later in this Agreement).

3. There are some situations where MidStep is permitted or required to disclose information without your Consent or Authorization, including:

- If you are involved in a court proceeding and we receive a Court Order for information concerning the professional services provided to you at MidStep. Therefore, if you are involved in or contemplating litigation, you should consult with your attorney to determine whether a court would be likely to order your doctor to disclose information.
- If a patient files a complaint or lawsuit against a doctor working at MidStep or its staff, we may disclose relevant information regarding that patient in preparation for or as part of our defense.
- If a doctor at MidStep is treating a patient who files a worker's compensation claim, we may, upon appropriate request, be required to provide otherwise confidential information to your employer.
- If a government agency is requesting the information for health oversight activities, we may be required to provide it for them.

4. There are some additional situations in which mental health doctors are legally obligated to take actions, including revealing information from a patient's treatment, in order to protect others from harm. If such a situation arises, your doctor will make every effort to discuss it with you before taking any action and will limit any disclosure to what is necessary. These situations are unusual.

- If your doctor has reason to believe that a child being seen for services may have been abused or neglected, the law requires that a report be made with the appropriate government agency, usually the Department of Public Welfare. Once such a report is filed, the doctor may be required to provide additional information.
- If your doctor has reason to believe that an elderly person or other adult is in need of protective services (regarding abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment), the law allows us to report this

to appropriate authorities, usually the Department of Aging. Once such a report is filed, the doctor may be required to provide additional information.

- If your doctor believes that a patient presents a specific and immediate threat of serious bodily injury to a reasonably identifiable victim and he/she is likely to carry out the threat, we may be required to take protective actions, such as warning the potential victim, contacting the police, or initiating proceedings for hospitalization.
- If a patient seriously threatens to harm himself/herself, your doctor may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her, or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have now or in the future.

MINORS & PARENTS: Patients under 18 years of age who are not emancipated and their parents should be aware that the law generally allows parents to examine their child's treatment records or PHI. However, because privacy in psychotherapy is often crucial to successful progress, especially with teenagers, it is sometimes our policy to request an agreement from parents that they consent to give up their access to their child's records. If you and your doctor agree to such an arrangement, then the doctor will only provide the parents with general information about the progress of the adolescent's treatment, and his/her attendance at scheduled sessions.

Any other communication will require the adolescent's specific Authorization, unless the adolescent appears to be in imminent danger him/herself or someone else, in which case, the doctor will notify the parents immediately. Before giving parents any information, the doctor will discuss the matter with the adolescent, if possible, and address any concerns he or she may have.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS: The laws and standards of our profession require that we keep Protected Health Information (PHI) about you or your child in your Clinical Record. It includes information about reasons for seeking therapy, a description of the ways in which the problem impacts life, diagnosis, the goals for treatment, progress towards those goals, medical and social history, treatment history, any past treatment records received from other providers, reports of any professional consultations, billing records, and any reports that we have sent out, including reports to your insurance carrier.

Except in unusual circumstances (e.g., possible danger to yourself or others; information that is supplied confidentially by others; certain references to another person), you may examine and/or receive a copy of your Clinical Record, if you request it in writing. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, it is recommend that you initially review them in the presence of your doctor, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional so you can discuss the contents. In most circumstances, your doctor at MidStep is allowed to charge for expenses incurred in producing or copying records. If your doctor refuses your request for access to your records, you have a right of review or appeal.

PATIENT RIGHTS: HIPAA provides you with several new or expanded rights with regard to your Clinical Record and disclosures of protected health information. These rights include requesting that your doctor amend your record; requesting restrictions on what information from your Clinical Record is disclosed to others; requesting an accounting of most disclosures of protected health information that you have neither consented to nor authorized; determining the location to which protected information disclosures are sent; having any complaints you make about policies and procedures at MidStep recorded

in your records; and the right to a paper copy of this Agreement or the attached Privacy Notice form. Your doctor will be happy to discuss any of these rights with you.

BUSINESS PRACTICES

APPOINTMENTS: The initial intake process usually involves 2-3 appointments including interviews with the patient, parents, and family as well as contact with relevant collateral contacts (e.g., school staff, prescribing physicians, former therapists). Psychotherapy appointments typically involve 45-50 minute sessions. Frequency of sessions is often once a week, though it will vary depending on the treatment needs. Except in emergencies, a cancellation fee for failing to provide 24-hour advance notice may be applied:

Late Cancellation (less than 24-hour notice)	\$30
No Show (no prior notice)	\$60

*Please note, at this time patients with CCBH coverage cannot be charged late cancellation or no show fees. This policy is subject to change based on the most recent contract with CCBH.

Appointments are scheduled directly with your doctor, not with the office staff at MidStep. Your doctor will provide you with their extension number that allows you to leave a voice message. Your doctor will make every effort to return your phone call as soon as possible. If calling after hours, please leave a voice mail message that indicates the appointment date and time, the reason for the cancellation, and a phone number to call to reschedule. Excessive numbers of late cancellations or no shows may result in termination of treatment once proper discharge planning has been agreed upon by doctor and patient.

CONTACTING YOUR DOCTOR: When your doctor is in the office, s/he is usually with a patient and does not take telephone calls during that time. When your doctor is unavailable, his/her telephone calls are answered by our automated voice mail system. Every effort to return phone calls on the day they are received will be made, with the exception of weekends, holidays, and vacations. If your doctor will be unavailable for an extended time, s/he will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

If you are unable to reach your doctor and feel that you need immediate assistance for a mental health crisis, call the Mental Health Crisis Line number in your area (State College Area: 800-643-5432). If it appears to be a life-threatening emergency, call 911 or go directly to your hospital emergency room for an evaluation.

BILLING & PAYMENT: You are expected to pay for services upon receipt of monthly billing statement from Gardner Management who provides our billing services according to the applicable rate schedule in effect at that time (currently \$120/hr for all psychological services), unless you have insurance coverage that requires another arrangement (see Insurance Reimbursements below). CCBH patients please note you will not receive a monthly statement from Gardner Management if your eligibility is current during dates of service. You are primarily responsible for all payments. Your insurance company may not cover all services, in which case you are responsible for remaining balances. If you are experiencing extreme financial hardship and cannot pay the full fee at the time of billing, it may be possible to negotiate a reduced fee or payment installment plan.

INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT

General Information—Health insurance benefits in general, and coverage for mental health services in particular, have grown increasingly complex in recent years. It is more important than ever for you to understand your mental health benefits before beginning treatment. Review your health insurance manual or contact your member services representative or plan administrator if you have any questions about your coverage. In addition, our staff at MidStep can help you understand the information you receive from your insurance company, and when necessary we will call the company on your behalf to resolve any outstanding issues.

Many Managed Health Care plans, such as HMO's and PPO's, will provide benefits only if services are rendered by a therapist who is in their provider network. Please be advised that if your therapist is not a provider in your health plan's network, and you choose to work with him/her anyway, then you will be required to pay the full fee at the time services are rendered. If this is not financially feasible, or poses financial difficulties as treatment progresses, we will be happy to help you find an in-network provider who can meet your needs.

Please be advised that your contract with your health insurance company requires your doctor to assign and provide a clinical diagnosis. Many insurance companies also require the doctor to provide treatment plans, progress reports, and in some situations, your entire clinical record. When providing information to your insurer, every effort is made to release only the minimum amount of information needed to satisfy their request. Please note, however, that the information provided becomes part of your insurance company's files and will probably be stored on a computer. Although all insurance companies are required to protect the confidentiality of such information, we have no control over the manner in which your insurance company uses or discloses your information.

Patient Responsibilities—If you have health insurance that provides coverage for mental health services, then you will be expected to remit payments as required by your insurance plan at the time services are rendered. This includes, but is not limited to: co-payments, co-insurance, deductible amounts, fees for non-covered services, and third-party payments.

If your insurance plan requires pre-certification for mental health services, you must obtain an initial referral from your insurance company prior to the first appointment to avoid additional fees. Your therapist will request approval of any additional services after the initial course of treatment, if needed.

If your doctor is a provider in your insurance company's network, our billing office will submit claims for you, but you are responsible for providing correct and complete information about all policies covering the patient so that we can prepare timely and accurate claims. You will be responsible for paying any claims that are rejected due to your failure to provide correct information to us in a timely manner.

PAST DUE ACCOUNTS: If your account becomes past due, late fees and interest charges may be applied. In addition, delinquent accounts may result in the termination of services and/or the referral of your account to a collection agency or small claims court. It is the policy of Gardner Management to send three letters indicating that your account is in jeopardy of being sent to a collection agency. It is your responsibility to respond to these letters in a timely manner in order to avoid being sent to a collection agency. Collection proceedings will require MidStep to disclose information that would otherwise be confidential, such as your name, address, telephone number, social security number, the nature of services rendered, and amount due. As with any disclosures we make of protected health information, disclosures to a collection agency will follow the "minimum necessary rule." Our collection or legal fees may be applied to you as well.