

Guidelines for an Informed Consent Form for Therapy

The following is offered as a general guideline for the development of an informed consent form for providing therapy in your psychological practice. While the Maryland Psychological Association (MPA) strives to make the information on this website as timely and accurate as possible, MPA makes no claims, promises, or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of these guidelines, and expressly disclaims liability for errors or omissions in the contents of these guidelines.

Informed Consent Defined: A process whereby the patient or client is made aware of the potential risks and costs involved in a treatment or procedure, conducted at the onset of treatment.

Requirements for the Acquisition of Informed Consent (Zuckerman, 2008):

1. Mental Competence – Obtaining informed consent requires that the individual consenting is of sound and stable mind.
2. Information – Obtaining full consent requires that the individual is provided with enough information regarding the treatment that they are able to make an informed decision.
3. Choosing Freely – Obtaining informed consent requires that individual is able to freely decide to engage in the therapeutic process without feeling unduly coerced.
4. Documentation – The APA ethics code requires psychologists to document consent to treatment. Documentation of consent may be achieved through a note in the client's chart acknowledging their verbal agreement to treatment or through a signed consent form.

Essential Statements of the Informed Consent which Acknowledge:

1. The client has received information about the nature and purpose of the proposed treatments and or procedures.
2. The client has been informed of the risks and benefits of the proposed treatment.
3. The client has not received any promises regarding the outcome of the proposed treatment.
4. The client is willing to take part in the proposed treatment.
5. The information received through the therapy process is confidential and may not be shared without prior consent, except in certain circumstances such as suspected abuse, threat to self or others, or as required by law.
6. The client has information regarding the therapist fees including expectations for payment, insurance information, and cancellation fees.
7. The records of treatment will be kept in accordance with all legal and ethical requirements.
8. The expected length of sessions and proposed treatment.
9. The client may stop treatment at any time, but will be responsible for paying for all services received.
10. The therapist has the right to stop treatment due to client non-compliance with treatment recommendations and/or to safeguard a risk to the client's well-being.

Optional Statements of the Informed Consent which Acknowledge:

1. The client has had the opportunity to ask and received answers to all their questions regarding the treatment they are about to receive.
2. The client understands that the development of a treatment plan with the therapist is to their benefit and their agreement to take an active role in this process.
3. The client understands that a late cancellation (length of time determined by the provider) will result in a cancellation fee (amount determined by the provider).
4. The intended treatment plan with an explanation for how progress in treatment will be evaluated.

Other Considerations:

1. If services are provided at the request of a third-party (e.g., by a lawyer), the psychologist clarifies at the outset the nature of their relationship with everyone involved.
2. When treating couples or families, the psychologist clarifies at the outset the nature of their relationship and limits of confidentiality with each person involved. For example, this involves identifying the primary client as it relates to insurance reimbursements and release of information.
3. It might be important to include a statement around what are the psychologist's grounds for the basis around initiating termination procedures with a client.
4. Consider outlining your policies around social media (responding to "Friend" requests, email communication, being "Followed" on Twitter, etc).

Reference:

Zuckerman, E. L. (2008). *The paper office: Forms, guidelines, and resources to make your practice work ethically, legally, and profitably (4th ed.)*. New York, NY: The Guildford Press.

Additional Resources:

<http://kspope.com/consent/index.php>

www.apait.org/apait/download.aspx

www.e-psychologist.org/index.html?mdl=exam/show_article.mdl&Material_ID=79

www.apa.org/monitor/jun04/ehitics.aspx

<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/02/ce-corner.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>

