

**Dedham Psychotherapy Associates  
601 High St. Suite 204  
Dedham, Ma 02026**

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## STATEMENT of PATIENT SERVICES

Please read this document carefully. It contains important information about every aspect of this practice. We are pleased to answer, and recommend that you ask, any questions that you have about the information in this document.

### Psychological Services

Psychotherapy is a broad term that describes the delivery of psychological services. There are a variety of approaches and treatment modalities available to address the needs and issues that you bring to treatment. Psychotherapy differs from psychotropic medication in that it requires your active participation and effort. In other words, if treatment is to succeed, you must work on the issues that you and your therapist discuss during the treatment session in between therapy appointments.

Psychotherapy is not without risk or problems. Uncomfortable feelings such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, and frustration often appear during the course of treatment. Psychotherapy might require you to discuss aspects of your life that are unpleasant, and occasionally embarrassing. Some people naturally experience anger and/or disappointment with their therapist during the course of treatment. These feelings are an essential part of psychotherapy and need to be discussed with your therapist for treatment to succeed.

Most people benefit from psychotherapy. Benefits can include clarity of purpose, improved relationships, reduction or elimination of symptoms, and stress reduction. . While the vast majority of our clients terminate psychotherapy with satisfactory outcomes, we cannot guarantee that anyone will absolutely benefit from a course of treatment, or the amount of time necessary for you to feel improvement.

The first few psychotherapy meetings are devoted to evaluating your problems, symptoms, and needs. We will share our initial impressions with you, and mutually discuss a course of treatment. Since psychotherapy can involve a

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significant commitment of time, money, and energy, it is important that you feel comfortable with your therapist and his or her treatment approach. If you are not comfortable with your therapist or the modality of treatment, please let us know immediately. We will discuss with you what approach you would consider to be a better match. Questions and concerns are *always* appropriate, so we request that you bring them up with us as soon as they arise.

### Evaluation Process

Initially, we conduct an interview with you so that your problems and symptoms are clarified. This initial evaluation generally consumes one to three 45 to 50-minute meetings, and involves a detailed personal and family history as well as a review of the issues and symptoms that brought you to our practice. When this evaluation process is completed, your therapist will discuss his or her observations with you, and request your feedback. We might recommend individual, couple, family, or group psychotherapy; and if we believe that a medication consultation might be necessary.

**Once an initial appointment is scheduled, you are expected to keep it. If you must cancel the appointment, you must give us notice by telephone at 781-329-1159 within a minimum of two business days prior to the appointment. If you do not notify us in a timely manner, you will be charged the full professional fee for the appointment.**

### Professional Fees and Insurance Coverage

The new federal and state laws have resulted in an increasing level of complexity about insurance benefits, which makes it more difficult to determine how much coverage is actually available to you.

Although you may have health insurance that will cover a portion of your treatment, there are often charges for which you are responsible. These charges include, but are not limited to, deductibles, co-payments, co-insurance and other fees your insurance company will not cover.

Evaluation of your insurance coverage and personal financial resources are essential in setting realistic treatment goals. Under 2010 Massachusetts law, your health insurance must include mental health coverage (there may be exceptions for companies with under fifty employees). Therefore, prior to your initial appointment, we strongly advise you to collect accurate information about your insurance benefits, any necessary pre-treatment authorizations, benefit

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limitations, etc. We recommend that you get WRITTEN information which describes your benefits, either from your benefit specialist at work, or from your insurance company website.

**Privacy of information and insurance companies: please note carefully.**

In order to bill your insurance company, we are required to submit only the following clinical information: DSM IV diagnosis code, ICDM procedure code, place of treatment, and date of service. Some insurance companies require written treatment plans from your therapist. You are entitled to review and discuss these plans with your therapist. Your signature on our fee statement signifies your consent to release this information to your insurance company for our reimbursement. HIPPA (the Federal Health Insurance Privacy and Protection Act) regulations require insurance companies to have appropriate privacy safeguards in place. However, we have no control over this information once it leaves our office.

Insurance companies **do not** cover the following: Missed scheduled appointments, late cancellations of appointments, lengthy consultations with outside sources (i.e. schools, physicians, psychiatrists, other therapists), letters and written reports, preparations of records, and treatment summaries. Our fees will be quoted in writing to you for such services as they arise.

Payment is required at the time of service unless you have a health insurance plan with which we are contracted. If we are members of your plan's provider panel we will bill your insurance company directly. However, all deductible amounts and co-payments are due at the time of service. We do not accept credit or debit cards.

If your account is more than 60 days in arrears, and you have not made suitable arrangements with your therapist for payment, we are entitled to use legal means to secure payment, including collection agencies and small claims court. You are responsible for any costs incurred in such actions. If we must take such action, only the minimum required information to file the complaint would be released: your name, address, the nature of services provided, the dates of service, and the amount due in payment to your therapist.

## Professional Records

Professional standards, and state and federal law require that we keep appropriate medical records. Your records are kept in a locked space and are only available to your therapist. Your therapist is bound by law to keep them in the strictest confidence. You are entitled to a copy of your record unless your therapist believes that this would be damaging to your mental health, and to your

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treatment. Should this be the case, you and your therapist would discuss the best option for you. If your therapist believes that the current release of a copy of your record might be upsetting to you, your therapist will tell you. In that case, your record can be released to a mental health professional of your choice for further discussion. Because professional records reflect specialized training, terms and language, diagnostic impressions, and other material that reflects professional analysis, the material might be upsetting to someone who does not fully understand the terms used for the analysis. It is for this reason that we require that you make an appointment with your therapist (or his or her designate) to review your records together.

Any request for release of your records, or any information contained therein, not covered by the insurance release clause stated above, **must be approved by you with your signature of specified release** prior to release.

### Confidentiality

The associated psychotherapists of this practice are bound by statutory rule of confidentiality (MGL1112 Section 129A and MGL 233 Section 20 B). These statutes state that communication between licensed psychotherapists and the individuals with whom the therapists engage in the practice of psychology are confidential but for those exceptions listed in the General Laws of the Commonwealth. These exceptions are generally summarized as follows: dangerousness to self; dangerousness to others; and, knowledge of sexual or physical abuse of a child or elderly person. If the laws must be invoked for your protection and/or the safety of another, the following might occur:

- Sexual or physical abuse of a child or elderly person:  
Physical and sexual abuse revelations are reported directly to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services, or the Massachusetts Department of Elder Affairs.
  
- Dangerousness to self:  
If you are threatening to harm yourself, we must attempt to do what is necessary to get you to a hospital for treatment and to contact family members who may be able to assist in your treatment and safety.
  
- Dangerousness to others:  
If you threaten to harm another person, they must be notified of your threat, we must inform the police of your threat, and attempt to hospitalize you before you cause harm.

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- Court proceedings and confidentiality:

In any court proceeding not involving a forensic evaluation, your treatment information remains confidential unless a judge orders its release through subpoena of records, or your therapist. These orders usually occur in child custody, sexual harassment proceedings, or when your emotional condition is relevant in the matter before the court. Courts and judges are deeply divided in regards to confidentiality issues, many judges feel that records are protected and may not be reviewed under any circumstances. Other judges feel that medical records may be relevant to their findings, but generally review confidential information in private before their decision to apprise attorneys or jurors of the information. Should your records be subpoenaed, you are strongly advised to consult with an attorney if you do not wish information to be released

We are a group practice and find it helpful to consult with one another about cases within our group. All consultants are bound by the same rules of confidentiality as noted above. Therefore, in these consultations, every effort is made to protect the identity of the client.

### Teenage Minors: Rules and Exceptions

If you are under eighteen years of age, the law may provide your parents with the right to examine your treatment records. It is our policy to advise parents to waive this right and allow your records to remain private. If your parents sign this waiver the confidentiality of your records and conversations with your therapist are the same as for an adult.

Teenagers mature at such rapid and varying rates that the confidentiality exception, “dangerousness to self “, varies tremendously. For example, a fourteen year old who drives without a parent’s permission is exhibiting behavior that is” dangerous to self”, a seventeen-year-old with a driver’s license is not. After evaluation, you and your therapist will discuss issues that may impact upon your confidentiality, and guarantee you that we will not reveal any information to your parents without discussing it first with you. We will listen to your side of any issues of conflict and try to resolve the conflict before we speak to your parents.

### Cancellation Policies

Health insurance companies have reduced our reimbursement rates by up to 40% in the past nine years. Many of our colleagues chose to see additional patients to recover income. We have not. We believe that we can only see a limited number of weekly patients so that each patient gets the attention and

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concentration that s/he deserves. As a result we must insure that every patient hour is filled. **Cancellations therefore must be received at least 48 hours, and two business days, before your appointment.**

When you become a client at Dedham Psychotherapy Associates your time is sacred. We require that you make the same commitment to us. If you are unable to make an appointment for any reason you must discuss this with your therapist and agree upon the cancellation well in advance of the scheduled date. If you do not follow this policy you will be required to pay the full fee for this appointment. Under contract, we cannot bill your insurance company for canceled appointments. The fee comes out of your pocket and must be paid prior to your next scheduled visit.

In the event of bad weather, your psychologist will leave a message on her/his voicemail concerning appointments for the day. **It is essential to check our voicemail. If your therapist has not cancelled appointments, and you assume that there is no meeting, you may be charged for the appointment at the clinician's discretion.**

### Contacting Us

You may leave a message on our confidential office voicemail (**781-329-1159**) at any time. We request that you leave a clearly and slowly articulated name and telephone number, and, if need be, a time to return your call. Please do not leave messages in e-mail unless specifically arranged by your therapist.

• **Urgent Contact:**

We generally do not check our messages on weekends, late in the evening, or on holidays. If, at any time, you feel that you are a danger to yourself or others, you must call 911 immediately and request assistance to be evaluated on an emergency basis at your closest hospital. Please then leave us a message from the Emergency Room, and we will make every attempt to return your call.