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WELCOME TO OUR CLINIC

CLIENT HANDBOOK

We know that you need reliable information to make the best choices for you and your family, so we developed this handbook to answer frequently-asked questions about our practice and our relationship with you. The more you know, the more we can help.

While some of this information has already been provided through telephone conversations, please read the entire handbook and ask any questions at your first scheduled meeting.

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I. INTAKE PROCESS

The intake process began when you first called SPSI. It includes reading this material and continues through the first one or two sessions, which consist of collecting information. At the intake a clinician will review the information in this Handbook and discuss your questions and concerns.

Typically your intake clinician will be your ongoing therapist; however, at times this will not be the case, depending upon your needs and the clinician’s availability. At the conclusion of the intake the clinician will describe the manner in which a therapist will be assigned for you if another therapist is necessary. The Clinic Director makes the assignment after meeting with the Intake Clinician within 24 hours of your first session. Your assigned therapist will contact you to schedule your first therapeutic appointment at your conveniences. Your therapist will be responsible for coordination of your treatment.

A. TREATMENT PLANNING

Each person who becomes a recipient of SPSI services will have an individually-tailored treatment plan. You are as much a member of your treatment team as your therapist. Dependent upon your needs, other members could include the Clinic Director, Social Worker, Psychologist, Speech and Language Pathologist, and Psychiatrist. You can add individuals you feel are important to your treatment such as a family member, a friend, or your referral source. These persons can be included only with your written permission. In the event other services, which SPSI is unable to provide, would be beneficial in your treatment (i.e., advocacy services, support groups) appropriate referrals will be made.

Development of your treatment plan consists of making choices. Therapy often requires significant commitments of time, money and energy. It is important that a therapist be chosen carefully. You should feel comfortable with your therapist. If you believe your current therapist is not the best for you, he/she will assist you in selection of another professional more suited to your needs. If you wish to receive a second opinion, SPSI will assist in making an appropriate referral and, with your permission, provide any information needed.

Treatment planning means exploring your expectations of treatment, as well as specifying goals and methods of treatment, responsibilities, benefits and risks of treatment, the approximate time commitment, costs and other aspects of your particular situation. The result is a written Treatment Plan. The formal version is typically developed within seven (7) days after your first therapeutic appointment and based on your strengths, needs, abilities and preferences. You and your therapist will use the treatment plan as a guide to keep treatment focused and effective. Your treatment team (remember, that includes you) will reevaluate your plan periodically and change it when appropriate to reflect growth as well as current and any foreseen needs.

It is your right to ask about other available treatments as well as the risks and benefits of each. In the event you can benefit from a method of treatment SPSI is unable to provide, then SPSI will provide you with appropriate referrals.

Therapy means changing and that requires active involvement and work both during and between sessions. Successful treatment requires work all week long between sessions. There are no instant or magical cures. Change can be easy and quick at times, but the majority of change is achieved through a gradual process, which can be frustrating and varies a great deal between individuals.

During therapy, you and your therapist will review progress. If treatment is not progressing, changes may be suggested, including asking that you see an additional therapist or professional, or trying a different method. The reasoning and recommendations about any changes will be discussed openly so you can make the choices best suited for you.

As with any treatment, there are benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable feelings, recalling unpleasant parts of your life, or confronting the loss of relationships (i.e., divorce, death). However, research has reliably demonstrated that therapy is beneficial in the majority of situations. Benefits may include decreased depression, feeling less angry or frustrated, or building more stable relationships.

SPSI does not accept clients for treatment who we feel we are unable to help. Thus, we will enter the therapy relationship with optimism.

B. PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS

At times it is helpful to use psychological testing to refine the clinical picture and determine treatment goals. Intellectual and personality tests are sometimes requested along with clinical interviews to develop a comprehensive picture of a client's functioning.

In many cases, psychological tests can be very helpful. If testing is suggested to you, we encourage you to participate. We understand any testing situation can be stressful, and we will do everything necessary to make the experience as comfortable and helpful as possible.

Of course you are free to decline or opt out of any psychological testing unless you are compelled by a legal entity.

II. APPOINTMENTS

To begin, most clients attend weekly, 45-50 minute sessions. Ten to fifteen minutes is scheduled between appointments for report writing, returning telephone calls, etc. Your therapist will inform you of changes in his/her schedule (i.e., vacations). To that end, please inform the office of any changes to your contact information. However, there are instances when advance notice is impossible such as illness or providing court testimony.

An appointment is a commitment to your work and a contract between you and your therapist. You agree and promise to be here on time. Occasionally your therapist may not be able to begin on time due to emergencies or scheduling complications. We apologize for this and your

therapist will attempt to make up any lost time. If you or your therapist should be late, it may not be possible to meet for a full 45 minutes.

Your session time is reserved for you. If you must cancel an appointment, we ask for twenty-four (24) hour notice and more notice is greatly appreciated. It is SPSI policy that a "no show" charge of \$40 may be assessed. (Please see Fees for more information about no show fees.)

It is difficult to make up a missed appointment during the same week due to other prescheduled appointments. Therefore, missed appointments are usually scheduled for the following week.

III. CONFIDENTIALITY

SPSI regards the information you share with us with great respect. In general your information will be shared with no one. In most cases, the privacy and confidentiality of our conversations and information shared are privileged and legally protected by Federal and State laws, as well as our professions' ethical principles.

There are some conditions under which some aspect of your case may be discussed. One is in professional supervision or consultation; this is one means we have of "checking" ourselves and assuring quality professional service. Any professionals with whom this information is shared are bound to confidentiality.

By law we must divulge information you have provided when you are a danger to yourself or others, about to commit a crime or it is believed a child is being abused or neglected. In these specific circumstances the law dictates that confidentiality, on those issues only, cannot be maintained. Confidentiality may be limited in such settings as criminal justice. Should you have any concerns regarding confidentiality, please raise them so they may be resolved.

Your insurance company usually receives only a statement of SPSI charges, treatment dates and a psychiatric diagnosis. The insurance company occasionally requests more details such as symptoms, progress and treatment methods. This information is likely to become a permanent part of your medical records. In general, this will have no negative impact. However, if you are concerned about this, please bring it up for discussion.

Otherwise, we do not and will not inform anyone about your treatment, diagnosis, history, or even whether you are a client at this clinic, without your full knowledge and a signed Release of Information form.

A. CONFIDENTIALITY OF MINOR CLIENTS

Minor clients also have confidentiality rights. However, records of and information regarding services rendered to a minor client must be made available to legally-acknowledged parent(s) or guardians upon request.

Information disclosed by the minor to his/her therapist and not part of the case record, will not be further disclosed to that minor's parent(s). In the therapist's clinical judgment if the case record contains information which could be harmful to the client, the therapist will consult the Executive Director who may make the decision to withhold a portion or all of the case record.

The Executive Director is the only person authorized to make such a decision. Examples when this could be necessary are:

- a) The relationship between the client and his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) would be unnecessarily damaged by information contained in the record.
- b) The therapeutic relationship between the minor and his/her therapist may be damaged.

State standards have established special guidelines for minors who are under treatment for substance abuse; these guidelines forbid disclosure of the substance abuse treatment of a minor client without said minor's written permission.

IV. CASE RECORDS

With written notice, you have the right to review your file at any time. You also have the right to make additions or corrections and to obtain copies for other professionals to use (only with your written permission).

However, in your therapist's clinical judgment if your case record contains material which could be harmful to you in any manner, he/she can consult the Executive Director who may then make the decision to withhold a portion or all of your case record. This decision can be made at SPSI by the Executive Director only. You may still make additions to the case record, and any material not considered harmful will be released to you.

SPSI retains your record in a secure place for a period of seven (7) years, after which time it will be destroyed.

V. MEDICATION AND HOSPITALIZATION

A. MEDICATION

As part of treatment in some cases, you may be requested to have a psychiatric evaluation. One result may be the psychiatrist's recommendation of medication to assist in reduction of psychiatric symptoms. As the client, you have a right to refuse such treatment. It should be clear if we feel we cannot provide adequate treatment without the help of medication, we may feel an ethical obligation to terminate our services with you.

B. HOSPITALIZATION

In rare instances, the therapist or psychiatrist recommends inpatient psychiatric admission if he/she believes the client can benefit from intensive therapy without the distractions of everyday life. In such cases, the client has the right to refuse the recommendation. If you are a danger to yourself or others, our standard of care requires we pursue involuntary hospitalization.

An average hospital stay is several days to two weeks. You would have a different therapist there, although your SPSI therapist may be allowed to contact you. After discharge, you could continue treatment with your SPSI therapist if you choose.

VI. FEES

In a professional relationship, payment for services rendered is important. SPSI is a private, fee-for-service, mental health agency. You are responsible for assuring that services are paid for; this demonstrates your seriousness and sincerity. Our rates are \$130.00 for an Intake with a therapist \$100.00 for a full session and \$70.00 for a half session. Psychiatrist rates are \$150.00 (full) and \$65.00 (half). Ph.D. Psychologist rates are \$100.00 (full) and \$70.00 (half). SPSI expects payment at the end of each session, unless other arrangements are made. Our rates for psychological testing vary dependent upon the time and tests required. It is expected that you will pay 50% at the commencement of testing and the remaining 50% upon completion. You will always be informed of testing fees prior to administration so you are able to decide whether you wish to proceed.

In the event you request special clerical or clinical work, SPSI may assess a charge for such services. These include, but are not limited to, duplication of billing statements (\$3.00), rebilling (\$5.00), records release (\$25.00 processing fee and 25 cents per page). Other clerical services not listed are charged on a \$30.00 per hour basis and may include, but are not limited to, completion of sick leave authorizations, physician's statements, and disability leave reports.

Other clinical services such as collateral contacts, case conferences, record reviews, attorney conferences, test scoring and interpretation reports, travel time and mileage to and from sites, and opinions, are charged at the rate of \$80.00 per clinical hour (45 minutes). Professional consultation, expert testimony, time spent in giving depositions or in court, testifying on client's behalf, time spent preparing for court will be charged at the rate of \$90.00 to \$110.00 per hour, which is the SPSI professional consulting fee.

The client is financially responsible for all services rendered to anyone for whose coverage he/she may be responsible. This includes, but not restricted to, any and all psychological testing, records reviews, records releases, evaluations, reports, counseling, legal testimony, attorney conferences or any activities related to services received including, but not limited to, duplication of billing statements, completion of sick leave forms, patient disability papers or insurance forms.

Direct payment at the time services are rendered will eliminate additional service charges; deferred payments may have a service charge assessed on the balance owed at the rate of 1-1/2% per month, or 18% per year. Patient statements will be billed monthly; outstanding balance at that time will be due and payable at the time statement is received. Interest charges are assessed on any account in excess of 30 days late in payment. Returned checks are subject to a \$25 returned check fee.

In the event any service not listed above is provided, the cost of that service will be clearly stated to the client prior to the provision of the service.

Any portion of the cost of services provided to the client that is billed to a third-party payor but not subsequently paid by the party will automatically be billed to the client. He/she will be responsible for payment at that time.

A. NO SHOW FEE

The client will pay \$40.00 for a full session and \$25.00 for a half session for scheduled appointments which are missed or cancelled without good cause at least 24 hours prior to the time of the appointment. Good cause generally means a personal health or safety emergency the day of the appointment. These charges are not billable to client's insurance and will be billed directly to client, depending on the situation and/or insurance requirements (i.e., SCCMH & Medicaid clients will not be charged a no show fee as this is prohibited by Federal Law).

This financial relationship will continue in effect with SPSI for the duration of services or until a client informs his/her therapist or the therapist informs the client in person, by telephone or mail, of the desire to terminate services. The total balance owed shall be due and payable at termination of services.

B. INSURANCE

SPSI is committed to providing you with the best possible care. If you have medical insurance, we will help you receive your maximum allowable benefits; however, we need your assistance and your understanding of our payment policies to achieve these goals.

For example, if you have health insurance which may pay all or a portion of SPSI fees, then we will assist you in completing necessary insurance claim forms. This includes all Master Medical plans which require payment first and subsequent submission of the claim to the insurance company.

But, please bear in mind that you, and not the insurance company, are ultimately responsible for payment of all agreed upon fees. If a request is made to bill a third party (i.e., separated spouse, parent, relative or Insurance Company) and that third party fails to assume payment, then you will be expected to make those payments. We do accept cash, checks and credit cards and you will be sent a statement that itemizes all charges at approximately four-week intervals.

Regardless, at the time of service, SPSI expects to be paid that portion of the bill for which the insurance company will not reimburse. At an absolute minimum, this is often the co-payment. However, more employers are choosing high deductible policies, which require that a deductible is met as well. At the intake session your financial obligation and fees will be explained.

Overall it is important to realize:

1. Your insurance is a contract between you, your employer and the insurance company. SPSI is not a party to that contract.
2. SPSI fees are generally considered to fall within the acceptable range by most companies. Therefore, they are covered up to the maximum allowance determined by each carrier. This applies only to companies paying a percentage (such as 50% or 80%) of "U.C.R." "U.C.R." is defined as "Usual, Customary and Reasonable" fees for this region. Thus, our fees are considered usual, customary and reasonable by the majority of companies.

This statement does not apply to companies who reimburse based on an arbitrary "schedule" of fees, which bears no relationship to the current standard and cost of care this geographic area. These same companies claim their arbitrary schedule is "U.C.R.", but they are not customary for this or any region; they are unusual and unreasonable fees which result in a higher cost to the patient in out-of-pocket expenses and/or possible inability to obtain needed services.

3. Not all services are a covered benefit in all contracts. Some insurance companies arbitrarily select certain services they will not cover. We must emphasize that as mental health providers, our relationship is with you, not your insurance company. While the filing of insurance claims is a courtesy which we extend to our patients, all charges are your responsibility from the date the services are rendered. We realize temporary financial problems may affect timely payment of your account. If such problems do arise, we encourage you to contact us promptly for assistance in the management of your account. We can find a solution that works.
4. If you have any questions regarding the above information or any uncertainty regarding insurance coverage, PLEASE do not hesitate to ask. We are here to help you.

C. FINANCIAL AGREEMENT

This is the agreement entered at the start of services that summarizes your responsibility for the fees and services to be provided, including missed appointments.

1. It authorizes SPSI to release necessary information in your records to your insurance company and maintain your signature on file to process claims, including Medicare.
2. It authorizes and directs your insurance company to make payments and send reimbursement directly to us.
3. Further, it requires that prior to service delivery we are to inform you of the cost of any new services you request which are not listed on the original Financial Agreement and add those new services to your original financial agreement.

VII. CONTACTING YOUR THERAPIST

When therapists are with clients, they usually do not take calls out of consideration. Clerical staff will take a message and your therapist will return the call as soon as possible. Our Clinic is generally open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday thru Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Friday. Appointments on Saturday and Sunday are by appointment only. If you need to contact your therapist after hours, call the Clinic number (799-2100) and our answering service will attempt to contact your therapist.

If you cannot reach your therapist and it is an emergency, we suggest you:

- 1) Go to the nearest hospital emergency room and request a psychiatrist, psychiatric resident or on-call physician.

- 2) Call the appropriate county hot line:
 - i) Saginaw County Crisis hotline (989) 792-9732
 - ii) Bay County Crisis hotline (989) 895-2300

VIII. SERVICE AGREEMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

This is the agreement to provide services that you request or are recommended to you. It also acknowledges you have read this Client Handbook, and that any questions you may have had were responded to.

It further authorizes SPSI to do a follow-up contact with you at a three-month interval following completion of services with us. If mandated to attend we may be required to follow-up on your status and/or report to the mandating agency about your condition.

IX. ENDING THERAPY

A. VOLUNTARY DISCHARGE

Termination (ending of treatment), is inevitable. This process can be made a valuable part of your work. Either you or your therapist may initiate termination when either feels it is in your best interest. Because this is an important part of therapy, you can expect this process will require several sessions. During the termination process, your goals and progress are reviewed. If you would like to take a vacation from therapy to try it on your own before you or your therapist makes a final decision about ending, this can be arranged. During the termination phase, you and your therapist will prepare an aftercare discharge plan for any needed follow-up appointments, referrals or services, so you have a written document to remind you of these necessary activities. You and your therapist will endorse the aftercare plan, which will be included in your file.

You may occasionally be requested to transfer from one therapist to another due to unavoidable circumstances (i.e., therapist moving, accepting another job, becoming seriously ill or some other event in his/her life which may interfere with services). We will make this as easy for you as possible; for instance, giving you advance notice and an opportunity to discuss this with your original therapist when possible.

B. INVOLUNTARY DISCHARGE POLICY

Under certain circumstances, clients may be discharged for cause from treatment or participation in services at SPSI. Conditions which may precipitate involuntary discharge are:

- a) Acts of violence or threats of violence against staff or other clients of the Clinic.
- b) Failure to maintain scheduled appointments for two weeks or regular contact with this Clinic in excess of 30 days.
- c) Failure to remain current with agreed-upon payment plan on outstanding client balance.

- d) Failure to work toward treatment plan objectives.
- e) For group therapy members, failure to maintain the confidentiality of other members of the group.

Clients whose actions are consistent with those listed above may be discharged by decision of the Executive Director in consultation with the primary therapist, or in the case of violence or threats of same, may be discharged instantly by the clinical staff member present at the time.

If you are being considered for involuntary discharge, your therapist will notify you in writing, unless the action is based upon threats of or acts of violence at which time you will be given referrals to appropriate alternative services. You have the right to appeal to the Executive Director regarding a discharge you feel is unfair. Upon admission for services, you will be requested to sign an Informed Consent to Discharge and/or Program Rules summarizing this policy.

X. THERAPY EVALUATIONS & FOLLOW-UP

It is important that each therapist attempt to evaluate his/her work in some manner. Since it is our desire to provide the best possible treatment, we ask you to accept the mailing of an evaluation questionnaire which is sent to everyone who seeks our services during a given year.

This questionnaire serves two purposes: to evaluate the treatment you have received from a particular staff member of SPSI, as well as allow us an opportunity to assess how you have progressed since leaving treatment. Therefore, we request that should you agree to accept services, you also agree to complete, to the best of your ability, and return an evaluation questionnaire.

You may also be asked to complete client satisfaction questionnaire during treatment. Please be sure to inform your therapist and/or their supervisor of any concerns you may have. However for those who may be in treatment due to being mandated, follow-up may be a requirement.

XI. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

SPSI is committed to promote the dignity and individual rights of clients served. Your therapist is prohibited from utilizing physical or sexual abuse, physical discipline, psychological abuse, fiduciary abuse, harassment, including humiliating, threatening or exploitation activities.

In the event you become dissatisfied with any aspect of therapy or relationship to the Clinic, we encourage you to please discuss it with your therapist immediately. If left unresolved, it may make the work you do with your therapist less productive and more difficult. If no resolution is achieved with your therapist, or you feel you can not address the issue directly with your therapist, then please contact your therapist's supervisor. This can be arranged by contacting the Clinic and requesting to speak with therapist's supervisor or informing the receptionist you wish to speak with your therapist's supervisor. You may at any time fill out the Client Complaint Form attached as the last page of this handbook. You may also contact any SPSI staff member with the complaint, at which time they will fill out the Client Complaint Form. Upon being

informed of the difficulty, the supervisor will investigate the matter. An impartial investigation will be conducted and confidentiality will be enforced.

Upon conclusion of the investigation, which may be a few hours to several days duration, the supervisor will verbally inform you of the results of the investigation and options relating to resolution of the concerns within seven business days and provide a written response within ten business days. If no successful resolution is achieved at this level, the matter will be appealed and brought to the attention of the Executive Director who will further investigate concerns presented in an impartial and confidential manner. The Executive Director will recommend resolution within 30 days. Every effort will be made to arrive at a workable solution for you and SPSI. The process may involve telephone contact to clarify and explore concerns. Meetings involving all parties may be necessary. Your expression of dissatisfaction will not result in retaliation or barriers to service. Availability of advocates and other assistance will be discussed with you when appropriate. External reviews are available for filing a formal complaint/grievance or appeal. Procedures are posted in the waiting room as well as brochures which are provided during Intake and upon request: "Know Your Rights" - "Your Rights."

XII. ADDITIONAL POINTS

As with any health care professional, we have an ethical responsibility to you. We abide by the ethical principles of various professional associations of which we are a member. It is important to remember your therapist cannot be your friend or meet with you socially. This would greatly interfere with the therapy process and violate our code of ethics.

As a group, we are licensed and trained to practice counseling, psychology, marriage and family therapy, social work, psychiatry, and speech and language services. However we cannot provide services that fall under the scope of practice of other professions such as legal, accounting, specialized medicine or any other profession. Should a question arise pertaining to an area in which we are not trained or licensed to practice, you will be referred to agencies or professionals possessing the appropriate capabilities.

A. ACCESSIBILITY

SPSI services are not restricted nor denied on the basis of age, gender, race, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, location of residence, marital status, sexual orientation or criminal record unrelated to present dangerousness.

B. CRISIS PROCEDURE

It is the policy of SPSI not to use seclusion and/or restraint except in emergency situations to prevent harm to self and others. Physical holds will be utilized only as a last resort after other attempts at de-escalation have failed. In the event a physical hold is necessary, it is limited to only the length of time during which the individual is a threat, or when family, appropriate law enforcement agents, safety and/or other emergency service providers arrive. You have the right to request in advance, the form any hold may take. If you believe there may be the need for a physical hold, then please discuss this with your therapist.

C. RESTRICTION/SAFETY ISSUES

SPSI places no restriction on the rights or privileges of client due to violation of program rules or failure to demonstrate progress in treatment.

SPSI has a no smoking policy which is strictly enforced. Clients are not allowed to smoke within the Clinic. Clients are to smoke at a minimum of 100 feet away from the building. Weapons and/or illicit drugs are not allowed on site. Clients are requested not to enter the Clinic under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs. Your safety, as well as the safety of other clients and Clinic personnel, is a primary consideration. Should a safety or transportation issue arise, it will be addressed immediately.

SPSI has exit signs throughout the building that identifies the emergency exits if there is a need to evacuate the building due to a fire or other emergency. SPSI staff are trained in evacuation of the building and will assist you. They also know where fire suppression equipment and first aid kits are located and can assist if there is a need for any of these items.

Please bring any concerns regarding your safety to the immediate attention of the nearest SPSI employee. If you feel unsafe for any reason, then please notify SPSI personnel immediately so we may take the necessary steps to ensure your comfort and safety. This may include walking you to your vehicle. Please note that the lobby is monitored by video camera.

We ask that you please be extra careful in the parking lot during wet, cold, snowy or icy weather. Our staff our happy to assist you to your car if you feel unsure of your footing.

D. PSYCHIATRIC ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

An "Advance Directive" is state statutory authority that allows for a person to specify, in advance, choices about how he/she wants to be treated in the event that illness (Crisis) renders him/her incapable of exercising treatment choices. Psychiatric advance directives formally declare the wishes of a person served for treatment should he/she become incapacitated.

You have the right to give specific instructions to your therapist regarding the level and extent of care that you wish to receive. Included in this is your right to accept or refuse restrictions, medical treatment and/or medication. Your therapist will work with you to develop a Crisis Plan with Advance Directives if hospitalization or other alternative residential setting is needed for either medical or psychiatric care, or if there is a crisis where you may need help with some routine tasks until the Crisis has passed. You have the right not to participate in the development of a Crisis Plan with Advance Directives.

E. LEGAL ENTITIES

Legal Services of Eastern Michigan (989) 755-4465 is located at 320 S. Washington, Saginaw MI. They are on the third floor and an available resource should you need legal assistance with housing, social services and/or family law problems.

XIII. CLIENT COMPLAINT FORM

Client Complaint Form

You can write your complaint here yourself, ask someone on staff to help, or ask another person you trust, including your guardian if you have one. You may turn this complaint in to any SPSI staff member or by mail or fax. Please retain a copy for you records.

Today's Date: _____

What is the problem? When did it happen? (Use the back & additional sheets if you need them).

What needs to happen to solve your problem?

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____

You may contact your Privacy Officer by calling (989) 799-2100 or faxing to (989) 799-2637

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	
Date complaint received: _____	Received by: _____
Routed to: _____	Date Resolved: _____

