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Informed Consent for Telecounseling Consultation

General Information

With all that is going on surrounding the COVID-19 virus, the uncertainty of each day and the rapidly-changing situation, we all may be facing emotions such as anxiety, stress, and fear. Briarwood has implemented a procedure so we can still assist our students and families while we are away from campus. Effective Monday, March 23, 2020, I will be available by appointment should your student need to talk to someone about this or any other situation that may be impacting their mental health.

Please note that the object of these services is not to provide long-term counseling, but to help students cope with difficulties interfering with their learning. For students' needs beyond the scope of short-term counseling, referrals to other service providers may be given.

Initial _____

Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality is extremely important. I will take extraordinary care and consideration to prevent unnecessary disclosure. The content and all relevant materials to the student's discussion will be held confidential unless the student requests to have all or portions of such content released to his/her parent or guardian. However, there are some limits to the client held privilege of confidentiality, including but not limited to:

- If a court of law issues a legitimate subpoena for information stated on the subpoena.
- If a judge signs a validly executed search warrant or compels me to testify in court.
- If a client is in therapy or being treated by order of a court of law, or if information is obtained for the purpose of rendering an expert's report to an attorney.
- If a client threatens or attempts to commit suicide or otherwise conducts him/her self in a manner in which there is a substantial risk of incurring serious bodily harm.
- If the therapist has a reasonable suspicion that a client or other named victim is the perpetrator, observer of, or actual victim of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, or suspected neglect of, children under the age of 18 years, persons with disabilities, or elderly persons.
- Information may be provided to parents, if the client is a minor.

Initial _____

Confidentiality with Adolescents/Teens

Counseling is most effective when a trusting relationship exists between the counselor and 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 they feel free to discuss personal matters without fear that their thoughts and feelings will be immediately communicated to their parents. This is particularly true for adolescents who are naturally developing a greater sense of independence and autonomy.

I will try to honor confidentiality whenever possible, knowing that if and when I choose to report back to a parent or guardian, it can irretrievably damage the therapeutic relationship. I ask parents to trust that I continually consider the best course of action regarding potentially breaking confidentiality. This involves first and foremost considering your child’s overall welfare, and then balancing their need for a safe place to discuss difficult topics with your need as a parent to remain informed.

Please be assured that if I become aware of situations or behaviors that I consider to be high risk, I will inform you as soon as possible. By allowing your child to engage in a conversation with me, you agree to my approach regarding their confidentiality, regardless of any legal right you may have to the content.

Initial _____

Telecounseling

The telecounseling appointment will be done through a two-way video link-up whereby the student can see my image on the screen and hear my voice. I have selected a video-conferencing system with a HIPAA compliant secure platform to allow for the highest possible security and confidentiality of the content of your sessions. You are responsible for making an account per the instructions I provide via email in order to establish the video connection. Should you encounter any difficulties establishing that account, I will be available via phone and email to assist.

In order to provide the safest environment for telecounseling, I will require that a parent or guardian be present in the household during the time in which your student and I meet. You are also responsible for creating and using additional safeguards such as creating passwords to use the computer, keeping your email and chat IDs and passwords secret, and maintaining security of your wireless internet access points.

I may periodically meet with students in groups; this introduces another level of consideration when it comes to confidentiality. For example, while you and your student may make every effort to maintain confidentiality within your home, the other students in the group may not.

However, unlike a traditional conversation in my office, I will not have the use of my other assets such as body language and it may not be equal to a true face-to-face conversation. Counselors are observers of human behavior and gather much information from body language, vocal inflection, eye contact and other nonverbal cues. Please be aware that misunderstandings are possible since non-verbal cues are relatively lacking. Even with video chat software, misunderstandings may occur since bandwidth is always limited

and images lack detail. I also acknowledge that there are potential risks with the use of this new technology. These include but are not limited to:

- Interruption of the audio/video link
- Disconnection of the audio/video link
- A picture that is not clear enough to meet the needs of the student or counselor

If any of these risks occur, the conversation may need to be stopped. I will do my best to re-contact the student to conclude our conversation.

Additionally, students and parents/guardians are not permitted to record telecounseling sessions, under any circumstances.

Initial _____

Emergency Information

I may not be available immediately to meet with your student. If your student is experiencing a crisis that requires immediate attention, please contact one of the following community resources, or contact your child's physician or go to the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline	1-800-273-8255
Crisis Intervention Houston	(832) 416-1177 Teenline: (713) 529-TEEN
Houston Behavioral Health Hospital	(832) 834-7710
West Oaks Hospital	(713) 995-0909
Emergency Responders	911

Initial _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

I certify that this form has been fully read and understood by me. I understand and agree to its contents. I volunteer to have my student participate in the telecounseling program as provided by Briarwood during this distance learning time period.

Student Name: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian: _____