Therapy Agreement for Court-Involved Families
(Private Divorce and/or Custody Disputes)

Campbell
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Campbell Psychological Services provides outpatient therapy to address mental health concerns and build clients' resilience to help them experience well-being in their lives. We also provide diagnostic evaluations. We do not provide medication, custody evaluations, parenting evaluations, co-parenting services, or reunification therapy.

Psychotherapy can be a very important resource for children of separation and divorce. Establishing a therapeutic alliance outside of the home can:

- Facilitate open and appropriate expression of the strong feelings which routinely accompany family transitions, including guilt, grief, sadness and anger.
- Provide an emotionally neutral setting in which children can explore these feelings.
- Help children understand and accept family changes and the plans for contact with each member of the family.
- Offer feedback and recommendations to a child's caregivers based on knowledge of the child's specific emotional needs and developmental capacities.

However, the usefulness of such therapy is extremely limited when the therapy itself becomes another matter of dispute between caregivers or a means of extracting information for the court. With this in mind, and in order to best help your child, we require that each of the child's caregivers (e.g., parents, stepparents, *guardian ad litem*/GAL) mutually accept the following as requisites to participation in therapy.

GUIDELINES

1. **The primary responsibility of your child's therapist is to respond to your child's emotional needs.** This includes, but is not limited to, having contact with your child and each of his or her caregivers, as well as gathering information helpful for understanding your child's strengths, needs, and circumstances (for instance, speaking with your child's pediatrician or teachers). In some cases, this may include a recommendation that you consult with a physician, should matters of your child's physical health be relevant to this therapy.

2. **All caregivers are encouraged to remain in frequent communication regarding this child's welfare and emotional well-being.** Open communication about his or her emotional state and behavior is critical. In this regard, each of you is invited to initiate frequent and open exchange of information with your child's therapist.

3. **All parties are asked to recognize and, as necessary, reaffirm to the child, that the child's therapist is his/her helper and not allied with any disputing party.**

4. **It is strongly recommended that all caregivers involved choose to participate in psychoeducational groups in which separating and divorced parents learn basic strategies for conducting a divorce in the best interests of the child.** Your child's therapist would be happy to help you find such programs.

5. **Psychotherapy will not yield recommendations about custody or other legal matters.** Parties who are disputing custody are strongly encouraged to consider participation in alternative forms of negotiation and conflict resolution, including mediation and custody evaluation, rather than try to settle a custody dispute in court. Custody recommendations, if needed, should be based on a custody evaluation conducted by a professional who has been trained in such matters.

6. Any matter brought to the therapist's attention by either parent regarding the child may be revealed to the other parent. Matters which are irrelevant to the child's well-being may be kept in confidence. However, these matters may best be brought to the attention of others, such as attorneys, personal therapists or counselors.

RELEASE OF RECORDS OR TREATMENT-RELATED INFORMATION

Campbell Psychological Services will create and maintain a health record related to your child's therapy, as required by law and applicable professional standards. Generally speaking, this information is shared with third parties only with consent from the appropriate persons under the law. More about control of treatment records and disclosure of information is included in our *Service Agreement* and *Notice of Privacy Policies.*

Sharing treatment-related information with the courts may not be in the best interest of your child and has the potential to seriously compromise your child's ability to benefit from therapy. Furthermore, when information is shared with outside parties, there is no guarantee that the information shared will be kept confidential. This could include information about your child's mental health history, treatment goals and progress. For these reasons, caregivers are discouraged from requesting the child's treatment-related information be shared with their attorneys or the court.

If treatment-related information is requested or subpoenaed by an attorney, it will be disclosed only after the appropriate consent, as required by law, is obtained. Your child's therapist will not have private conversations with your attorney about your child's treatment, even with your permission. Requests should be made in writing and, in most circumstances, your child's therapist will copy the attorneys of all parties on his or her response.

When families are court-involved, there may be circumstances in which a therapist is required to provide information regardless of whether the client or guardians consent. These situations include, but are not limited to:

- If your child has a been appointed a *guardian ad litem* (GAL), the court may have ordered that the GAL have access to information about your child's treatment, including treatment records.
- A judge may require (court order) the release of written records, other information, or testimony by your child's therapist.
- If your child has been court-ordered to participate in therapy, the order may include requirements that the therapist share certain information with the court.
- If a custody evaluator is appointed, your child's therapist may be court-ordered to share information with the custody evaluator.

If your child's therapist has reason to believe that disclosing certain information may be harmful to your child, he or she may take steps to limit the information shared.

As noted above, your child's therapist will not make recommendations regarding custody or other legal matters. He or she will only provide information related to your child's therapy.

PAYMENT FOR THERAPY AND OTHER SERVICES

Please see the *Service Agreement* for further information regarding fees and payment for therapeutic services.

Billing insurance for treatment requires that your child be given a mental health diagnosis. If therapy is provided solely to offer your child a source of support and is not deemed medically necessary, it will not be covered by insurance and our full fees will be charged.

Responsibility for fees is outlined below, unless other arrangements are made in advance and in writing:

- The caregiver bringing the child to the appointment is responsible for making any payment due at the time of service.
- Fees for late cancellations or missed appointments ("no shows") are the responsibility of the parent who scheduled the appointment.
- Court-related activities are not billable to insurance. Such activities, including time spent responding to requests for information, are billed at a rate of $200 per hour.
- Court-related charges are the responsibility of the caregiver making the request or whose attorney makes the request. If the activity is court-ordered by a judge, the cost will be divided equally between all parties, unless the court specifies otherwise. Before your child's therapist will engage in any court-related activity, a minimum retainer of $800 must be paid. Any unspent portion of this retainer will be refunded within 30 days of client discharge or within 60 days of the last request for court-related activity, whichever comes first.
- Should any or all of the client's record be requested, the charge will be based upon the allowable charges for copies of medical records, as published by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.
- Therapist attendance at court interferes with a therapist's ability to be available to his or her other clients. Should your child's therapist or any other professional at Campbell Psychological Services be required to appear in court, the fee is $1,600 per day, payable by cashier's check or credit card 7 days prior to the court date. This fee is non-refundable. Should a case be rescheduled or continued for any reason, the therapist will be paid in full for each day. Any time spent preparing for court or traveling more than 15 miles one-way from our office to court is charged at a rate of $200 per hour and charged against the retainer.

Your understanding of the information above and agreement in advance of starting this therapy may resolve difficulties that would otherwise arise and will help make this therapy a successful and positive experience for your child. Your signature, below, signifies that you have read, understand, and accept this agreement.

If your child has been court-ordered to participate in therapy, a copy of the court order must be provided prior to the start of therapy, to ensure that the services ordered are within the scope of what we provide. If there is an existing custody order, a copy must also be provided prior to the start of therapy.

_____	_____	_____
Child's Name	Date of birth	Age

Caregiver 1

_____	_____	_____
Printed Name	Signature	Date

Initial one:

_____I ***have*** reviewed this Agreement with my legal counsel.

_____I ***have not*** reviewed this Agreement with my legal counsel.

Caregiver 2

_____	_____	_____
Printed Name	Signature	Date

Initial one:

_____I ***have*** reviewed this Agreement with my legal counsel.

_____I ***have not*** reviewed this Agreement with my legal counsel.

Guardian Ad Litem (if applicable)

_____	_____	_____
Printed Name	Signature	Date