THE BRIDGE FAMILY CENTER
POLICIES FOR THERAPY SERVICES

The Bridge Family Center is a community-based non-profit agency that serves children, teens, adults, couples, and families. This policy statement provides information about client rights, confidentiality and limits of confidentiality, the grievance procedure, arrival and attendance to scheduled appointments, ending therapy, fees, the use of insurance, and emergencies. Clients are asked to keep these policies and discuss them with their therapist as needed.

CLIENT RIGHTS

Clients of the Bridge Family Center have the following rights:

- To be notified of rights before agreeing to services.
- To be treated with dignity and respect. Staff of the Bridge will inform clients of any expectations they have of clients/family in a language and manner that can be understood.
- To participate in the development of the treatment plan, to review individual treatment plans, and to express opinions and disagree with the plan.
- To be informed regarding the specific services being recommended. This includes being told of the purpose(s) of services, alternatives that could be offered, and potential benefits and/or risks associated with the services. This includes recommendations for medications.
- To refuse services and to be informed of any known consequences of such refusal.
- To confidentiality of information regarding himself/herself and family. Unless verbal or written permission is given, no information regarding a client or client's family will be shared outside the Bridge, except as noted below.
- To feel safe within the Bridge offices and with Bridge staff.
- To be heard when voicing concerns regarding potential violation of their rights. Bridge staff will help clients understand and participate in the grievance process.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

All information about clients is confidential. This means that the names of clients and family members, as well as anything about clients and families in treatment, will not be discussed outside of the Bridge Family Center.

Exceptions to confidentiality:

- Therapists may discuss client needs, treatment planning, and progress with their supervisors and other Bridge therapists in individual and group clinical supervision and peer consultation for the purpose of improving treatment. Such discussions take place only in the work environment and in an appropriately private setting.
- Clients may give written permission to share information to enhance or coordinate treatment as well as for referral purposes.
- Information may be shared with a client's insurance company when using insurance to pay for therapy. Information needed to seek payment or to authorize further sessions may include diagnosis, treatment history and progress, and the treatment plan.
- If therapy fees are not paid, a legal means of collecting payment may require the release of the client's name, address, nature of the services provided, and amount due.
- Information may be shared in court proceedings, in which a judge requires a copy of a client's treatment record and/or testimony from a Therapist.

- Information may be shared to protect a client or someone else from immediate danger of seriously hurting oneself or someone else. If a client refuses necessary and appropriate treatment, such as hospitalization, family members or others who can help provide protection or facilitate treatment may be contacted.
- Mandated Reporting: Connecticut law requires staff members of the Bridge Family Center to report any alleged or suspected child abuse (physical and/or sexual) or neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Therapists are not judging or investigating the validity of such statements or observations, but are legally obligated to provide that information to DCF.
- Email: Email is not a protected form of communication and is not to be used between a therapist and client. Therapists can be reached via their work phone number and voice mail or during scheduled session times.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

All clients have the right to raise any concern regarding the manner in which they are treated by Bridge staff, or as a result of the services they receive. In addition, a non-involved staff member may help a client report a grievance that comes to the staff member's or trainee's attention.

- Clients are asked to discuss their concerns with their therapist or the staff person with whom they have a complaint. If the therapist or staff person does not respond satisfactorily, the client may file a grievance. Additionally, if the client does not feel comfortable discussing their concern, they may file a grievance without prior discussion.
- Grievances should be reported to the Clinical Director or Program Director, who will review, seek consultation from the Executive Director when needed, and take necessary action.
- The Clinical Director or Program Director will discuss the outcome of the grievance with the client.

ARRIVAL TO APPOINTMENTS

- **Clinic hours of operation are as follows:**
  Bridge West in Avon: Mondays-Thursdays from 10-8 and Fridays from 10-7
  Bridge East in Rockville: Tuesdays from 10-8; Wednesdays from 10-8; Thursdays from 2-8; and Fridays from 11-5
  Bridge Main in West Hartford: Mondays-Thursdays from 8:30-8; Fridays from 8:30-6; and Saturdays from 9-3 (no Saturday hours from Memorial Day thru Labor Day)
- Clients check-in upon arrival and proceed to the waiting area until greeted by their therapist at their appointment time.
- Parent participation in treatment may be essential to effective treatment.
- Children 12 years old and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian who must remain on the premises during the appointment. Some children over 12 years of age may be brought through other arrangements with the agreement of the child's therapist. The parent or guardian must make payment arrangements prior to the appointment being held.

ATTENDANCE TO SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS

The Bridge Family Center is committed to providing the most effective treatment possible. In order to accomplish treatment goals and utilize the therapist's time effectively, clients are expected to attend scheduled appointments consistently.

- Therapists and clients will work together to find mutually agreeable times to meet.

- Clients will receive an automated reminder call and/or text two days prior to their appointment.
- When a client cannot attend a scheduled therapy appointment, the client must call to cancel at least 24 hours before the appointment or respond to the automated system or will be expected to pay a $50 fee. Insurance will not pay for unattended sessions. Clients may leave a message on the therapist's voice mail 24 hours a day.
- Special circumstances will be taken into consideration for missed appointments. Similarly, therapists will make every effort to notify clients of the need to change or cancel an appointment in advance.
- If a client "no shows" for an appointment, or if 2 sessions are missed, this will be documented in the client record and addressed with the client by the therapist. If attendance does not comply with agency expectations, the therapist has the discretion to discharge the case.

ENDING THERAPY

The manner in which a therapeutic relationship is ended is very important. The most successful endings are planned and occur in a scheduled therapy session.

FEES

The value of therapy services is $200 per session for the initial assessment and $145 per session for ongoing therapy. In order to make services available to clients in need, the Bridge Family Center provides a sliding fee scale for those who do not have insurance, whose insurance the clinic does not currently accept, or who cannot pay the full fee. The sliding fee scale is possible due to funding from the Town of West Hartford, private donations, foundations, as well as some donated staff time and resources.

- The Bridge participates in most insurance plans. Clients must bring a valid insurance card to appointments to provide proof of insurance. As a courtesy, the Bridge will check insurance benefits, but clients are encouraged to contact the insurance provider directly to fully understand benefits and financial responsibility. If the client is insured by a plan the Bridge accepts, but doesn't have an up to date insurance card, payment in full for each visit is required until coverage can be verified.
- Clients may need to obtain authorization for coverage of services prior to the first visit.
- If a sliding fee is needed, the fee will be determined prior to the first appointment. Clients will be asked to supply financial documentation to support their request for a sliding fee. Clients are asked to inform their therapist and/or the billing associate when financial circumstances change, for better or worse. Periodically the billing associate may request updated financial information.
- Clients are expected to pay all session fees and insurance co-payments and deductibles to the therapist or front desk staff at the time of appointment, in accordance with their insurance contract and/or their payment agreement with the Bridge. If 2 payments are missed, including late cancellation and no show fees, sessions will be suspended until payment is received in full. Please note that the current therapist and day/time slot may not be guaranteed in these situations.
- The responsible adult who is transporting and/or attending the session is responsible for full payment at the time of session. In the case of dual households, it is the responsibility of the parent signing the Agreement for Therapy Services to coordinate payment arrangements with the other parent prior to the appointment. If full payment is not met, the parent signing the Agreement for Therapy Services is ultimately responsible for payment. Parents/guardians should not send children alone to sessions without

payment. If it would be helpful, client credit card information can be kept on file and used to bill each session. See your therapist or the front desk staff for an authorization form.

- Please be aware that some of the services you receive may not be considered reasonable or necessary by insurers. These services must be paid for in full at the time of visit.
- A $25 fee will be charged for checks returned due to insufficient funds.
- The Bridge will submit client claims and make reasonable attempts to assist with getting claims paid. The insurance company may need the client to supply certain information directly. It is the client's responsibility to comply with their request. Please be aware that the balance of the claim is the client's responsibility whether or not the insurance company pays the claim. The insurance benefit is a contract between the client and the insurance company; the Bridge is not party to that contract.
- If insurance changes, please notify the Bridge before the next visit so the appropriate changes can be made to assist in receiving the full benefit. If the insurance company does not pay claims within 45 days, the balance will automatically be billed to the client.
- When insurance benefits are exhausted, or if a plan no longer covers services, clients are responsible for full payment.
- If a therapist is asked or required to attend a court proceeding on a client's behalf, clients are expected to pay a retainer of $290 (2 hours) at the time of request. If the client is unable to pay the full amount at that time, an invoice will be sent. The invoice must be paid in full at least one week prior to the court hearing or the therapist may not be able to attend the hearing. If more than 2 hours of the therapist's time is required, an invoice for the balance will be sent following the court date. Payment is expected prior to or at the next regular therapy session. If court is cancelled and the therapist is not given 24 hour notice and attends court, the retainer fee will be forfeited by the client. Court fees include travel time to and from court as well as time spent at court. In addition, if records are requested, the client will be billed 25 cents per page. Failure to pay court related fees may result in sessions being suspended until payment arrangements are made.

MEDICATION

While credentialed clinic staff conducts medication evaluations, the Bridge does not administer medication.

EMERGENCIES

First aid kits are available at all clinic locations. In addition, emergency contact numbers are posted at all clinic locations. If there is an emergency while your child is at the Bridge offices and you are not in the building, your child's therapist will address the immediate safety of your child, call 911, and remain with your child. Once your child's safety is addressed, you will be contacted. If your child is transported to the hospital, your therapist will contact you and request that you go to the hospital immediately. If you are in the building at the time of the emergency, you will make the appropriate decisions for your child with the support of your child's therapist. The therapist will follow-up with you following the incident. If you are an adult client and there is an emergency, your emergency contact person will be contacted if appropriate.

If there is a life threatening emergency after regular work hours, please call 911. If you or your child wishes to speak with the therapist for urgent issues in between sessions that cannot wait until the next session, or next business day, please call our **answering service at 860.647.3620**. The answering service will attempt to reach the therapist and request that you be contacted as soon as possible. If you do not hear from your therapist within 10 minutes after calling the answering service, you may call the answering service again or call 211 or 911 for assistance. You may also leave a message in the voice mailbox of your therapist.

Clients are asked to keep this information for future reference and to discuss any questions or concerns with the therapist and, if needed, the Clinical Director at 860.313.1119.

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