

## **Consent for Treatment of a Child**

### **Risks and Benefits**

Counseling for children can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of one's life, your child may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness. Working through difficult emotions can sometimes lead to an increase in difficult behaviors before the child is able to utilize new skills or fully integrate their experiences. On the other hand, counseling has been shown to have benefits for individuals who go through it. Therapy can lead to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, significant reductions in feelings of distress and improved self-esteem. But there are no guarantees of how a child will respond.

Children are unique and holistic beings that sometimes require assistance and support in order to grow and develop to their fullest potential. Counseling can often be beneficial for children and their families and one way of working with children is to utilize play in a therapeutic manner. Play can be explained as the language of children. The use of therapeutic play enables a child to re-organize or make sense of their world; it can also serve to strengthen a child's sense of self and to gain mastery over their world or their "problems." Using play to explore a child's experience gives the child psychological distance and provides an opportunity to express themselves or themselves in a safe way.

In providing counseling to children, and in using play as a therapy technique, the therapist invites the child into a special "playtime" but the therapist is not a "play partner." Rather my role is more significant as the therapist reads, follows, interprets, and responds to the child's play.

### **Confidentiality**

Therapists who work with children have the difficult task of protecting the child's right to privacy while at the same time respecting the parent's or guardian's right to information. Therapy is most effective when a trusting relationship exists between the therapist and the child. Privacy is especially important in securing and maintaining that trust.

In our practice, we provide individual counseling to children and ensure the caregiver/parent is involved in the process through consultation with them. At times, the parent/caregiver may even participate in the sessions. However, to ensure a child's privacy we will not provide detailed information to the parent/caregiver regarding what the child shared unless the child provides assent. Instead, general themes, ideas and recommendations will be provided as well as support and encouragement to the parent/caregiver.

If it is necessary to refer your child to another mental health professional with more specialized skills, we will share that information with you. Other areas of confidentiality will be discussed during the first session with the child in the presence of their parent/caregiver to ensure complete understanding and agreement prior to the initiation of counseling.

**Joint/Shared Custody Circumstances**

When the parents are not separated, we will rely upon a signed Consent for Treatment of the Child from either parent.

Where the parents are living separate and apart and the child resides with one parent with the consent of the other, the parent with whom the child resides has the right to consent to treatment on behalf of the child, unless or until a separation agreement between the parents or a court order provides otherwise. It is the parent's obligation to disclose to Insight if they are separated or divorced.

If the parents have joint/shared custody of the child(ren), Insight Psychological needs to be informed whether the consent of both parents is required. In the rare case where both parents must consent to treatment, Insight will not proceed to treat without the consent of both parents. We also require the legal agreement as part of the consent process.

**As joint/shared custody parents each have access to their child(ren)'s file information, Insight Psychological requires explicit written direction regarding any other requirements or restrictions related to information sharing such as, appointment confirmations, phone or address information, extended health benefit information, etc.**

**Insight cannot be responsible for determining these restrictions and will assume there are none unless specified in writing, determined during the session or included in a court order that has been provided to our office.**

**Revoking Consent**

**Both you and your child may** end the counseling relationship at any time, without penalty or prejudice (with the exception of late cancellations/no shows as identified on the consent for treatment form). While free to discontinue services at any time, it is preferable to have a closing session or phone call, to ensure the child understands that counseling is ending and to provide an appropriate closure to the experience.

You may also have the right to refuse or discuss modifications of any of my counseling techniques or suggestions that you believe may be harmful.

**Acknowledgment and Consent:**

By your signature below, you are indicating that you have read and understood this consent form or that any questions you had about this consent form were answered to your satisfaction.

**Consent for Treatment of Minors:**

We consent that our child under the age of 18, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of child) may be treated as a client by \_\_\_\_\_ (name of therapist).

This form is in effect until \_\_\_\_\_ (date) or until 12 months after the consent was given.

Consent can be revoked at any time.

**Parents:**

**Please do not leave the office while your child is with their therapist unless discussed with your therapist.** Your presence may be necessary during your child's visit.

Parent\* or Guardian\* name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent\* or Guardian\* Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent\* or Guardian\* name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent\* or Guardian\* Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE\*: If parents/guardians have joint or shared custody of the minor, this form must be signed off and executed by both parents/guardians. This consent form must be provided separately from each parent, directly to Insight. If only one parent/guardian has custody of the minor, a copy of the custody court order indicating that the parent/guardian has sole custody of the minor must be included with this form. A copy of the minor's birth certificate which indicates the name of that one parent as the sole parent will also suffice.**