

WNY Psychotherapy Services

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Western New York Psychotherapy Services was created to provide a broad range of psychotherapy services within the privacy of an independent practice setting. WNY Psychotherapy Services consists of Psychologists, Social Workers and Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners. Each therapist at WNY Psychotherapy Services is an independent provider. Each clinician has been selected on the basis of their professional competence and their concern for others. While they are associated with the network known as WNY Psychotherapy Services, each therapist is entirely independent in providing clinical and medical services. WNY Psychotherapy Services (through Zannoni Enterprises) provides each therapist in the network with secretarial, billing, credentialing, office space, etc. Psychotherapy records are maintained separately from those of the other providers and no other network provider is allowed access to them without your written permission. Once you have completed treatment, your therapist is responsible for storing and maintaining your clinical records. These inactive records are not stored in our facilities. In addition, WNY Psychotherapy Services does not keep a copy of the clinical record.

Questions about your clinical care should be addressed to your individual therapist, not to WNY Psychotherapy Services. Likewise, checks for services are made out to your specific therapist, not WNY Psychotherapy Services.

In the pages that follow, we have outlined information to the questions most commonly asked. Please feel free to ask your therapist and the staff for further explanation to anything covered in this brochure. It is our hope that all of these services are provided in a professional and reassuring manner.

Sincerely,

**Joseph Zannoni, LCSW-R
Executive Director**

SERVICES OFFERED AT WNY PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES:

- Individual, group and marital psychotherapy for adults.
- Family psychotherapy.
- Testing and assessment of children and adults with learning, behavioral, cognitive and emotional disorders.
- Individual psychotherapy for children.
- Child custody and visitation assessment.
- Medication Management by Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners.
- Consultation and staff development for agencies, institutions and organizations.
- Industrial liaison programs.

FACILITIES:

AMHERST OFFICE: For your assistance, there is an elevator at the back entrance of the building. A wheelchair accessible unisex restroom is located on the second floor near the elevator.

ORCHARD PARK OFFICE: An elevator and men's and woman's restrooms are located to the left of the reception area.

Please do not leave young children unsupervised in the waiting rooms. The receptionists are neither able nor responsible to supervise them; we cannot guarantee their safety. If there are special circumstances concerning children in the waiting room, please discuss them with your therapist.

ASSIGNING A THERAPIST TO YOUR CARE:

Following an initial request for an appointment, the Intake Office staff contacts each new patient. In doing so, it is our goal to assign the therapist who best matches your stated, specific needs. Factors such as work schedule, insurances and the like are also taken into consideration. We wish to familiarize you with our policies and assist in answering your questions during the Intake process. We make every effort to schedule your first appointment within one week of your request.

FEE AND PAYMENT POLICIES:

In our experience, a clear and detailed statement regarding fee and payment policies is helpful in preventing financial misunderstandings. Such misunderstandings can adversely affect your confidence in treatment. For this reason, we make every effort to make policies clear. We understand that evaluation and treatment can be expensive. We encourage you to discuss any aspects of our billing and payment procedures with your therapist or with the Billing Department (Monday through Friday between 9:00 AM and 3:30 PM).

The clinical providers are professionals with differing experience and training. The therapists' fees for service have been set at different rates. These differences in rates do not reflect the therapists' skills in the practice of psychotherapy, testing, etc. Fee schedules are reviewed annually. You will be notified in advance if your therapist is expecting an increase in fees. This should allow adequate opportunity to discuss the effect of any rate increase.

The clinicians at WNY Psychotherapy Services participate in a wide variety of insurance plans. They comply with all rules and requirements set forth by these insurance companies. Most companies require some form of co-payment or deductible. It is the responsibility of the patient to know the extent of his/her insurance coverage. Should your insurance claim be denied for any reason, you are responsible for direct payment of fees. All co-payments, deductibles and non-insurance covered self-pay fees are due in full at the time of service. There are no exceptions to this policy.

**If you have a change in insurance coverage, please contact our Billing department at least 48 hours in advance to ensure that all insurance information is updated to your account.

*****All co-payments for services provided to a child are the responsibility of the person bringing the child to the visit, even if you have a separation or divorce agreement that states otherwise. It is up to you to work out financial responsibility with the other parent.**

All patient's insurance plans that require pre-authorization or referrals are the patient's responsibility. If the patient does not obtain this, services will be billed on a self-pay basis until proper authorization is obtained.

Some individuals have the type of insurance coverage which reimburses them directly for our services. As with all healthcare, the patient or the designated responsible party is expected to provide payment directly to their therapist at the time of service with the insurance company providing reimbursement to the patient.

A patient's balance may not exceed one visit without prior discussion and approval from your therapist. In such instances, patients will be notified by mail that the account must be paid or services will be interrupted after the next scheduled appointment. While we do not reduce the fees charged by any therapist, most therapists are, under certain circumstances, willing to work out various payment plans. These plans are available only under special circumstances and require prior approval by your therapist.

Consultation with parents regarding their children sometimes may not be covered by your insurance plan. Different insurance carriers have different policies regarding this service. We suggest that you review your plan or contact your insurance company representative. We also recommend that you get the name of the representative who advises you. The fee for these services is at the same hourly rate as is charged for family psychotherapy.

Occasionally, a therapist is required to provide expert witness testimony on behalf of a patient in a legal proceeding. There will be a fee charged for these services based both on the actual time spent in Court and on the time necessary for preparation for testimony and travel. Advance payment is required. There is no insurance reimbursement for this service. Please discuss the fee with your individual therapist.

You may wish to have your therapist attend a meeting or conference on you or your child's behalf. This situation arises most frequently when a parent requests that a child's therapist attend a school conference or when a patient requests that their therapist meet with their family physician. These services are usually not billable under most insurance plans. If you think that you might require this service, we suggest that you contact your insurance company beforehand to determine if your policy provides such reimbursement. Should you request this service, your therapist will discuss charges with you.

Accounts having uncollected fees due to non-payment will follow standard collection procedures. These procedures may involve the use of a collection service for no-payment accounts and/or prosecution in the case of checks being returned. In the event any unpaid debt is turned over to our collection agency, the patient will be held liable for any and all collection fees and/or attorney fees needed to collect the debt.

We have offered a detailed comprehensive explanation in order to anticipate questions and avoid misunderstandings. For that reason, we have attempted to outline the roles of

the patient and this office regarding fees and payment. If you have any questions regarding payments, insurance coverage or any related policies, please speak to your therapist directly or to our Billing Department. We will gladly clarify any confusion.

MISSED APPOINTMENT AND LATE CANCELLATION FEE POLICIES:

Our office policy requires that we be notified **24 business hours** in advance of a cancellation. Sessions missed without proper notice, regardless of the reason, will be billed as a missed appointment. Insurance does not cover this charge. The missed appointment fees range from \$50.00 to \$100.00. No late cancellation fee will be charged if we are able to fill the appointment with another patient.

All missed appointment and late cancellation fees must be paid in full on or before the date of your next scheduled appointment unless you have an arrangement with your therapist. Failure to do so may result in all future appointments being suspended until the fee is paid. Some therapists have their own policies regarding their fees and you should discuss this policy with your therapist.

This office can take appointment/cancellation calls anytime during our normal business hours at (716) 837-6705 (Amherst) or (716) 675-9232 (Orchard Park). **Saturday, Sunday, and holidays are not considered business days. For example, if you have a 10:00 AM appointment scheduled for Monday, you must call before 10:00 AM the prior Friday in order to avoid a late cancellation fee.**

These fees are not intended as a punishment, but rather reflect our belief that the patient should share in the cost of the reserved therapist time that cannot be utilized by another patient.

PHONE CALLS:

WNY Psychotherapy Services maintains offices in two locations in Erie County. Between these offices, therapists are available six days and four evenings a week. In addition, we maintain a 24-hour emergency answering service. Each provider is available for emergency after-hours telephone calls, which can be made by dialing the Amherst phone number at 716-837-6705. We will always try to be available to you for after hours emergencies. If such an occasion arises, please advise our answering service that you are placing an emergency or urgent call. We will return your call as soon as possible. **If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, you should go directly to the emergency room of your local hospital.** Non-emergency calls will be returned the next business day by your therapist.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Assuring your privacy is very important. If you are an adult, anything you say or do in the context of psychotherapy cannot be revealed to another person without your permission. For this reason, we do not have a sign-in sheet; please check in at each of your appointments. Historically, complete confidentiality has applied to communications between most types of psychotherapists and patients. However, recent legal developments have limited the scope of confidentiality as follows:

- If you behave in a manner that poses a threat of a physical nature to another person, your therapist will use his/her judgment in deciding whether to inform a responsible person.
- A therapist is to assess the degree of risk to a patient's life when suicidal feeling present themselves. If, in the therapist's opinion, there is a substantial risk of suicide, he/she will take steps to reduce the risk of suicide. In extreme circumstances, it may be necessary to provide transport to hospital via ambulance.
- If you disclose intent to commit a crime, privilege is waived. That is, psychotherapists may not tacitly aid or abet in the commission of crimes.
- The Law requires your therapist to report cases of potential, clear, or alleged child abuse.
- In special circumstances, a Judge may order that a patient's records be made available to the Court. Your therapist **MUST** comply with a Judge's request.

Your confidentiality cannot be absolutely assured in any therapy in which more than you and your therapist are present. WNY Psychotherapy Services clinicians will be extremely careful to respect your needs in that situation.

Parents or guardians of minors (12 years old and younger) are entitled to information communicated by their children in psychotherapy. However, ethics require your child's therapist to communicate only in ways that will be helpful. For example, if your child's intellectual abilities are evaluated, they will provide you with as much helpful information as possible regarding strengths, weaknesses and potentials, but may refrain from indicating to you the IQ score itself.

We require that the custodial parent be informed before a report may be released to a non-custodial parent. If a non-custodial parent's wishes to have his/her child evaluated without the custodial parent's permission, please plan to discuss this problem with your therapist before scheduling an appointment for your child. Patients whose fees are

covered by insurance should be aware that the insurance company might require a diagnosis and the information necessary to substantiate it. Occasionally, insurance companies review your therapist's chart records. He or she will be glad to discuss the diagnosis with you. It is assumed that when you give us an insurance form, it releases your therapist to fill out the diagnosis and other portions of that form.

Your therapist is often asked to provide information or to request information from a third party. It is a common occurrence that referring physicians request an initial report and possibly a progress report from your therapist. Many insurance companies require your primary care physician to request such reports. Often, by signing a contract with your insurance company, you have given written permission for your physician to receive such reports. For third party requests, you will be asked to sign a "Release of Information" form, without which your therapist cannot send records. It is your choice whether to sign the Release; please discuss this with your therapist.

IN CONCLUSION:

We make every effort to assure that your therapy will be productive. Research has shown that patient satisfaction and patient-therapist congruence correlate highly with a positive therapy outcome.

Patient satisfaction is given a high priority. WNY Psychotherapy Services has conducted random patient satisfaction surveys. Ninety-three percent of the patients surveyed were highly satisfied with their treatment. (2% did not respond, 5% were dissatisfied.) Patient-therapist congruence is another important factor in therapy outcome. Generally, patients who have similar attitudes, values and beliefs (about psychotherapy, how therapy works and what can be expected from therapy) to their therapists' tend to be more successful in their therapy.

Because each patient is an individual and because a variety of factors affect the outcome of treatment, it is not ethical to guarantee positive results. Occasionally, the treatment may have unexpected results. If you have any questions in this regard, please plan to discuss them with your therapist.

We hope this information is helpful to you. Please keep this copy for future reference. We look forward to providing you with the highest quality standard of care in a professional, yet relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to direct them to your therapist. If they cannot answer your questions, they will direct you to the member of your staff that will be able to assist you.

Thank you for choosing Western New York Psychotherapy Services.