



Avers & Biddle Counseling Associates LLC  
1681 Crown Ave Suite 10 Lancaster, PA 17601  
(717) 208-6686 Fax (717) 208-6687

## Outpatient Services Agreement

Welcome to our practice. We are very excited to be working with you. If this is your first time in counseling or even if you have been through counseling before, there are some things you should know about our practice and the counseling relationship. We have provided this form to help you stay informed about what to expect when working with us.

### General Information

- Our office hours are by appointment and vary. If you need to reach your therapist outside of a scheduled session, we do our best to answer any phone calls or emails within 1-2 business days unless it is a weekend or holiday.
- In the event of an emergency situation, you are always encouraged to call 911 or visit the emergency room at the closest hospital. In the event of a crisis situation, please call Lancaster Crisis Intervention at 717-394-2631. In the event that the emergency situation or crisis situation occurs during a session, your therapist will take the proper steps to assure that you are referred to the appropriate level of care.
- We strongly believe you should feel comfortable with the therapist you choose, and optimistic about your treatment. Therapy is more likely to be a benefit to you when you feel this way. We view therapy as a partnership between us where we are working together. Psychotherapy requires your very active involvement. From time to time, we will look together at our progress and goals. If we think we need to, we can then change your treatment plan and its goals.
- The length of time spent in therapy depends on several factors such as your particular mental illness or situation, severity of the symptoms you are having, and how long you've had symptoms or have been dealing with your situation. There are times when it may take only several sessions to help you cope with a short-term situation. In other cases, treatment may last a year or longer if you have a long-term mental illness or other long-term concerns.
- Counseling sessions generally last 45 minutes to an hour. Please call at least 24 hours ahead of time if you are unable to keep an appointment or you may be charged a \$45.00 fee.

### About Hannah Avers MSW, LCSW

Hannah is a licensed clinical social worker who has been in the human services field since 1998. She began her career working in group homes for individuals with developmental disabilities and then became a director, overseeing the day-to-day operations of six residential homes. She has also worked as a therapeutic support staff for children diagnosed with autism and as a recreational therapist on both an Alzheimer's unit and an inpatient mental health unit. Her masters level internship from 2004-2006 was with the South Central Juvenile Firesetters Program where she conducted mental health assessments for children who had started fires and assisted in teaching education sessions. She began providing therapy in 2006, working with families and their children who were at risk for out-of-home placement due to emotional or behavioral issues. In 2008 she began working as an outpatient

psychotherapist. She enjoys seeing diverse populations and for the past nine years has worked extensively with women, young adults, teenagers, children, and survivors of trauma and domestic violence. She holds the following credentials:

- Obtained bachelor of science from York College in 2002
- Obtained masters in social work from Temple University in 2006
- Have a license to practice clinical social work in the state of Pennsylvania
- She is a member of the National Association of Social Workers

In addition to her education, she has participated in various trainings that have focused on different types of treatment orientations, treating trauma and anxiety, and working with survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

#### **About Mindy Biddle MA, LPC**

Mindy is a licensed professional counselor who has been in the human services field since 1998. She began her career working in an inpatient setting with juveniles. She then worked in a co-op setting for individuals with developmental disabilities. Her masters level internship from 2006-2008 was with the Women's shelter in Reading and then the Caron foundation where she worked with clients who had both mental health concerns as well as drug and alcohol addictions. During that time Mindy also worked as a therapeutic support staff with children and teenagers in the home and community setting. In 2007 (as she finished up her internship requirements) she found her passion as an outpatient psychotherapist. She enjoys seeing diverse populations and for the past eight years has worked extensively with adults, young adults, teenagers and children in individual sessions as well as family and couple's sessions. She holds the following credentials:

- Obtained bachelor of arts in human services from Alvernia University in 2004
- Obtained masters in community counseling from Alvernia University in 2008
- Have held a LPC licensure (Licensed Professional Counselor) since 2010 which enables her to provide treatment in the state of Pennsylvania.
- She is a member of the American Counseling Association.

In addition to her education, she has participated in various trainings and that will continue to be ongoing to uphold my licensure requirements.

#### **About Rachel Bonser, MS, NCC, LBC, LPC**

Rachel is a licensed professional counselor who has been in the human services field since 2007. She began her career working in group homes with individuals diagnosed with developmental disabilities. She graduated in 2008 from York College with her Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a minor in criminology. She then began her work as a therapeutic support staff for children diagnosed with autism and child behavioral disorders. She also worked with adults on the spectrum as a community inclusion staff. After attaining her graduate degree in 2015 from Walden University, she began her work as an outpatient therapist and mobile therapist. She has also worked as a behavior specialist working with both children and adults diagnosed with autism. She enjoys seeing diverse populations to include children, adolescents, young adults, women, men, and working with families. She holds the following credentials:

- Obtained Bachelor of Science in psychology from York College in 2008
- Obtained Master of Science in clinical mental health counseling from Walden University in 2015
- Have held a licensure as an NCC (National Certified Counselor) since 2016
- Have held a licensure as an LBS (Licensed Behavior Specialist) since 2016
- Have held a license as an LPC (Licensed Professional Counselor) since 2018, which allows her to work within the state of Pennsylvania
- She is a member of the American Counseling Association
- She is a member of Chi Sigma Iota (International Honor Society for Counseling)

In addition to her education, she has participated in various extensive trainings on a variety of subjects to include grief and grieving, anxiety, trauma, autism, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT), mindfulness, play therapy, art therapy techniques, and 1-2-3 Magic. She will continue to participate in trainings and seminars to help further her education and knowledge, as well as, uphold her licensure requirements.

#### **About Holly Sheaffer MSW, LSW**

Holly earned her Bachelor's of Social Work (2010) and Masters of Social Work (2013) from Millersville University.

Holly's expertise includes over 14 years of social service work-with populations including adolescents & children, elderly, victims of domestic violence, developmentally disabled, individuals struggling with addiction, individuals who have perpetrated domestic violence, and individuals who have sexually offended. Holly has over 5 years of expertise in working with the forensic population. She has provided individual and group therapy to adults who have sexually offended, perpetrated domestic violence, and struggle with significant mental health concerns. Holly currently facilitates supervised visitations for non-custodial parents and their children, co-parenting therapy, reunification therapy, and general outpatient therapy. Holly most recently achieved her License of Social Work (LSW) in July 2019 and is currently pursuing her Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) achievement. Holly is trained in a specialized trauma treatment modality of Eye-Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) protocol.

#### **About Brandais Gary MEd, NCC**

Brandais Gary is a nationally certified counselor and a certified kindergarten through twelfth grade school counselor that began her career in 2015 in the school counseling field. In her role as a school counselor, Brandais has gained experience working with diverse groups of children, providing individual and group counseling, bibliotherapy, solution-focused therapy and play therapy. She also has experience working as a liaison between community mental health agencies and families to facilitate appropriate mental health supports.

During graduate school Brandais gained experience working with young children through older adolescents. She also has worked as a therapeutic staff support providing clinical interventions to children with behavioral needs and clients on the autism spectrum. Her specialties include, but are not limited to; working with children, multicultural clients, women, families, trauma, adjusting to life changes and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Brandais believes in a person-centered and cognitive behavioral approach to therapy. She has completed continuing education focusing on trauma, anxiety and counseling techniques for diverse populations. She will continue to pursue additional certifications and education to strengthen her practice.

Brandais is currently working on her certified clinical trauma professional certificate and is pursuing counseling licensure as a licensed professional counselor (LPC) that will be completed in 2022. Brandais has obtained the following:

- Graduated from Albright College in 2010 with Bachelor of Arts degree
- Graduated from Shippensburg University with Master of Education degree in 2015
- Pennsylvania School Counseling Certification, K through 12 since 2015
- NCC (National Counselor Certification) since 2019

#### **About Katie Chaffinch, LCSW**

Katie is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. As a therapist, she enjoys working with clients across the lifespan. Katie's emphasis is to utilize the strengths of each client and their environment, empowering clients to live their lives to the fullest.

After completing her Master's in Social Work in 2012, Katie served children and families as a Behavior Specialist and Mobile Therapist, working with clients in their homes, schools, and communities. Katie later worked as a school-based therapist with kindergarten through high school aged clients. She has greatly enjoyed working with families to find solutions for challenging behaviors, anxiety, family transitions, and other behavioral health concerns. Katie also has experience working with youth and adults who are experiencing severe and persistent mental health challenges. Katie's educational background includes:

- Bachelor's in Social Work from Eastern Mennonite University, 2007
- Master's in Social Work from the University of Kansas, 2012
- License to practice clinical social work in Pennsylvania

Katie has training in Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, Trauma-Focused CBT, Play Therapy, and working with families experiencing homelessness.

#### **The Benefits and Risks of Therapy**

There are some risks as well as many benefits when it comes to participating in therapy. Sometimes throughout the course of treatment clients will have uncomfortable levels of guilt, sadness, anxiety, anger, loneliness, or other negative feelings. Clients may recall unpleasant memories that could bother them. Sometimes, too, a client's problems may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment. Most of these risks are to be expected when people are making important changes in their lives. Finally, even with our best efforts, there is a possibility that

therapy may not work out well for you.

However, there are also many benefits to participating in therapy that are backed by research studies. Individuals may no longer feel afraid, angry, or anxious and depression may decrease. Clients' relationships and coping skills may improve and they may get more satisfaction out of their relationships. People also often find that they have a clearer sense of direction about what they want in their life.

### **About Confidentiality**

Generally, the privacy of all communications between us is protected by law, and your therapist can only release information about your work to others with your written permission. However, there are a few exceptions listed below. These circumstances do not occur often and if one of them does happen, your therapist will typically make an effort to discuss it with you before taking any action.

-Child Abuse: If your therapist believes a child is being sexually, physically, or emotionally abused, they are required by law to report this to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare.

-Judicial or Administrative Proceedings: If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made about the professional services your therapist provided or a records request is made, this information is privileged under state law, and we will not release the information without your written consent, or a court order. Confidentiality does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. Your therapist will tell you in advance if this is the case.

-Worker's Compensation: If you file a worker's compensation claim, your therapist is required to file periodic progress reports with your employer.

-Serious Threat to Health or Safety: If you express a serious threat, or intent to kill or seriously injure an identified or readily identifiable person or group of people, and your therapist concludes that you are likely to carry out the threat, we are required to take reasonable measures to prevent harm. Reasonable measures may include directly advising the potential victim of the threat or notifying authorities. Confidentiality would also not be protected if you make a serious threat to harm yourself.

There are two circumstances in which your therapist might talk about part of your case with another therapist. First, when your therapist is on vacation, they have a fellow therapist cover for them. This person will be available to you in case of an emergency and therefore needs to know about you. In a situation like this, your therapist would have you sign a release of information form so that they can share information. Second, we sometimes consult with other therapists about our clients to receive feedback and advice on how to help you. These persons are also required to keep your information private. Your name will **never** be given to them and they will be told only as much as they need to know to understand your situation.

Except for situations like those described above, your therapist will always maintain your privacy. If your records need to be seen by another professional, or anyone else, your therapist will discuss it with you and you will need to sign a release of information form. It is our office policy to destroy clients' records 10 years after the end of our therapy. Until then, we will keep your case records in a safe and secure place.

### **Statement of Principles and Complaint Procedures**

Hannah Avers LCSW, Katie Chaffinch LCSW, and Holly Sheaffer LSW fully abide by the ethical code of the National Association Of Social Workers (NASW) and by those of her state license. If you would like to read the code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers you can find it at <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>. Mindy Biddle MA, LPC, Brandais Gary MEd, NCC and Rachel Bonser MS, LPC abide by the ethical code of the American Counseling Association as well as by those of their state licenses. Just as in any relationship, problems can sometimes arise as you are working with your therapist. If you are not satisfied with what is happening in therapy, please talk to your therapist about your concerns. It will be more difficult to make progress if your concerns are not worked out. We will make every effort to hear any complaints you have and to seek solutions to them. If you ever feel that you have been treated unfairly or that your therapist has broken a professional rule, please contact Mindy Biddle MA LPC or Hannah Avers LCSW. You can also contact the state or local board association and speak to the chairperson of the ethics committee. He or she can help clarify your concerns or tell you how to file a complaint.

In our practice, we do not discriminate against clients because of age, sex, marital/family status, race, religious

beliefs, ethnic origin, veteran status, physical disability, health status, sexual orientation, or criminal record unrelated to present dangerousness. We will always take steps to advance and support the values of equal opportunity and racial/ethnic/ cultural diversity. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please bring this matter to our attention immediately.

### **Minors**

In the state of Pennsylvania, minors who are 14 to 17 years old have the right to independently consent to and receive mental health treatment without parental consent. The general rule is that the person who initiates treatment (the minor or their parent/guardian) has the right to control information. When minors of this age initiate their therapy, information about their treatment cannot be disclosed to anyone, including their parents, without the adolescent's agreement. Although confidentiality in psychotherapy is very important, especially with teenagers, in most cases parental involvement is also essential. Therefore, we typically ask that adolescents authorize us to provide general information to their parents about their treatment.

If the parents of 14 to 17 year olds initiate therapy, then they have the right to ask about their adolescent's treatment. We will provide parents with only general information about their teenager's treatment, unless we feel that there is a high risk that the adolescent will seriously harm him or herself or someone else. Before giving parents information, we always discuss this with the adolescent and do our best to handle any objections they may have to what we plan to disclose. Parents do have the right to access treatment information for minors under the age of 14. As with minors aged 14 and older, we usually ask parents to allow us to give them general information about their child's therapy so that the child feels like they can confide in us. However, younger children typically require more parental involvement than older children. In all cases, your therapist will disclose any concerns that he/she might have if they feel that the child might harm him or herself or someone else.

**Your signature below indicates that you have read this form and agree to abide by its terms while you are receiving services at this office.**

---

**Signature**

---

**Date**

☐ Client accepted copy    ☐ Declined copy