

NORTH HILLS PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES, INC.
SERVICE BROCHURE

Welcome to our practice. This document contains important information about our professional services & business policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions that you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting. This will constitute a binding agreement between us.

SERVICES

Available services include individual, family, and couples psychotherapy and psychological testing for children, adolescents, adults, couples and families. An initial evaluation will enable us to recommend the most appropriate treatment for you.

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personality of both the clinician and the patient and the particular problems/concerns which the patient brings. There are a number of different approaches which can be utilized to address the problems you hope to change. It is not like visiting a medical doctor, in that psychotherapy requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Risks sometimes include experiencing uncomfortable levels of feelings like sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness. Psychotherapy often requires recalling unpleasant aspects of your history. Psychotherapy has also been shown to have benefits for people who undertake it. It often leads to a significant reduction of feelings of distress, and better relationships and resolutions of specific problems. There are, however, no guarantees of therapy.

We assess for the mental health and substance abuse status of all individuals receiving treatment. By the end of the evaluation, your therapist will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what our work will include and an initial treatment plan, if you decide to continue. You should evaluate this information along with your own assessment about whether you feel comfortable working with your therapist. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about our procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, your therapist will be happy to help you to secure an appropriate consultation with another professional.

CLINICIANS

A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who has obtained additional qualifications to become a specialist in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illness and emotional problems. Psychiatrists are able to do evaluations, therapy and prescribe medications.

A licensed psychologist has either a Master's or Doctoral degree in psychology or a related field, has completed the required number of hours (3500 hours) of supervised experience, under the direct supervision of a licensed psychologist, and has met all other criteria required by the state licensing board to be eligible to sit for and successfully pass the state and national licensing exams. A psychologist can provide therapy, psychological testing and evaluations.

A school psychologist has either a Master's or Doctoral degree in education or psychology & holds a certificate in school psychology, received after completing educational requirements & an internship under the supervision of a certified school psychologist. School psychologists use their knowledge to study how students' surroundings at home & at school affect the way they learn.

A licensed clinical social worker has a Master's degree in social work and has passed the state licensing exam. A Master's level social worker has completed two internships under the supervision of a Master's level social worker, and has completed the educational requirements that provide specialized training in individual, family and group therapy.

A licensed professional counselor has a Master's degree in counseling and has passed the state licensing exam and has completed at least two years or 2,400 hours of supervised clinical experience.

OUR CLINICIANS

Please visit our website www.nhpa.com for a listing and bios of our clinicians.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Psychological services are best provided in an atmosphere of trust. Your clinician will be honest with you about your problems and progress. You are expected to be honest with your clinician about your expectations for services, your compliance with medication and other recommendations, and any other barriers to treatment.

Because trust is so important, all services are confidential. Except for the exceptions described below, your status as a client, and

everything you say during therapy remains confidential. If it would be helpful to collaborate with other professionals, such as physicians or schools, this will be done only with your written consent, and only to the extent required. Also, if you have managed care insurance, certain information may need to be shared with your insurance carrier, with your written permission. We may be required to submit reports or discuss your case with a case manager. We have no control over the confidentiality of information once it is released to insurance companies. Their standards of confidentiality may be different from ours. Some of this information may then be entered in a databank which could be accessed by other insurers and could potentially affect access to insurance at a later date.

Due to changes in the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law please note the following. If a clinician has reason to suspect, on the basis of their professional judgment, that a child is or has been abused, they are required to report their suspicions to the authority or government agency vested to conduct child abuse investigations. Clinicians are required to make such reports even if they do not see the child in a professional capacity.

Clinicians are mandated to report suspected child abuse if anyone aged 14 or older tells them that he or she committed child abuse, even if the victim is no longer in danger. Clinicians are mandated to report suspected child abuse if anyone tells them that he or she knows of any child who is currently being abused. Also if we believe that an elderly person or a disabled person is being abused, we may be required to file a report with the appropriate state agency.

If we believe that a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another, we may be required to take protective actions, which may include notifying the potential victim, notifying the police, or seeking appropriate hospitalization. If a client threatens to harm him/herself, we may be required to seek hospitalization for the client, or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

In most judicial proceedings, you have the right to prevent your therapist from providing any information about your treatment. However, in some circumstances such as child custody proceedings and proceedings in which your emotional condition is an important element, or in the case of a court order, a judge may require a therapist's testimony if he or she determines that resolution of the issues before him or her demands it. These situations have rarely arisen in our practice. Should such a situation occur, we will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

In order to provide the best treatment possible, our staff meets regularly for ongoing case consultation and supervision. Your therapist may occasionally find it helpful to consult about a case with other professionals. The consultant is, of course, also legally bound to keep the information confidential. Unless you object, your therapist will not tell you about these consultations unless your therapist feels that it is important to your work together. If you are uncomfortable with, or have questions about, this process, please discuss this with your therapist.

In the case of treatment of a child/adolescent, please be aware that requesting the release of treatment plans, notes or reports for forensic (court) purposes, or subpoenaing testimony about the content of your child's treatment, interferes with the therapy relationship and greatly jeopardizes his/her/their health and wellbeing. Therefore, by initiating treatment you knowingly and freely waive your right to request the release of information (other than dates of sessions, length of sessions, attendance at sessions, and fee information) to your attorney or any other Officer of the Court. It is further understood that release of clinically-significant information to any Officer of the Court shall be by Court Order, signed by a duly appointed Judge, only.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns which you may have at our next meeting. As you might expect, the laws governing these issues are quite complex and we are not attorneys. While your therapist is happy to discuss these issues with you, should you need specific advice, formal legal consultation may be desirable.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Please note that if you need to contact your clinician between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone. Please do not use Texting (SMS mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact your clinician. These sites are not secure and we may not read these messages in a timely fashion. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with your clinician in public online if we have an already established client/therapist relationship. Engaging this way could compromise your confidentiality. It may also create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your legal medical record and will need to be documented and archived in your chart. We prefer using email only for rare circumstances. Please do not email your therapist content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with your clinician by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and our Internet service providers. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these logs,

they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of the Internet service provider. You should also know that any substantive emails we receive from you and any responses that we send to you become a part of your legal record.

Our primary concern related to the use of Social Media is your privacy. Therefore, we do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). We believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up when we meet and we can talk more about it.

We post psychology news on Twitter. We have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow our Twitter stream. If you share this concern, there are more private ways to follow us on Twitter (such as using an RSS feed or a locked Twitter list), which would eliminate your having a public link to our content. You are welcome to use your own discretion in choosing whether to follow us. Note that we will not follow you back. We only follow other professionals on Twitter and we do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter. Our reasoning is that we believe casual viewing of clients' online content outside of the therapy hour can create confusion in regard to whether it's being done as a part of your treatment or to satisfy personal curiosity. In addition, viewing your online activities without your consent and without our explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially have a negative influence on our working relationship. If there are things from your online life that you wish to share with your clinician, please bring them into your sessions where we can view and explore them together, during the therapy hour.

It is NOT a regular part of our practice to search for clients on Google or Facebook or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions *may* be made during times of crisis. If we have a reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with your clinician via usual means (coming to appointments, phone, or email) there *might* be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if we ever resort to such means, we will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

If you use location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. We do not place our practice as a check-in location on various sites such as Foursquare. However, if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise that you are a therapy client due to regular check-ins at our office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally "checking in," from our office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

You may find our psychology practice on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Yahoo Local, Bing, or other places which list businesses. Some of these sites include forums in which users rate their providers and add reviews. Many of these sites comb search engines for business listings and automatically add listings regardless of whether the business has added itself to the site. If you should find our listing on any of these sites, please know that the listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as our client.

The American Psychological Association's Ethics Code states under Principle 5.05 that it is unethical for psychologists to solicit testimonials: "Psychologists do not solicit testimonials from current therapy clients/patients or other persons who because of their particular circumstances are vulnerable to undue influence."

Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, we cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. We urge you to take your own privacy as seriously as we take our commitment of confidentiality to you. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with your clinician about your feelings about your work together, there is a good possibility that your clinician may never see it.

If we are working together, we hope that you will bring your feelings and reactions to our work directly into the therapy process. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide we are not a good fit. None of this is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in therapy with me wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that we cannot tell people that you are our client and our Ethics Code prohibits us from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish about your therapist or how you feel about the treatment we provided to you, in any forum of your choosing.

If you do choose to write something on a business review site, we hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. We urge you to create a pseudonym that is not linked to your regular email address or friend networks for your own privacy and protection.

If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, do bring them to our attention so that we can discuss them. If you feel we have done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with your clinician, you can always contact our President, Loretta Gephart, M.A. at 724-759-7514.

COORDINATION OF CARE

NHPA will coordinate care with your Primary Care Physician & other treatment providers with your written permission.

FEES FOR SERVICE

Intake Evaluation	\$195	Unpaid Co-pay	\$10
Psychotherapy 45 min	\$138	Legal Prep or Attendance	\$300 per hour*
Family/Couples Therapy	\$138	*Billed in half or full day increments, at the discretion of the provider.	
No Show	\$50	Check Returned	\$25
Cancellation w/o 24 hr notice	\$25		

In addition to weekly appointments, it is our practice to charge this amount on a prorated basis for other professional services you may require such as report writing, telephone conversations which last longer than 10 minutes, attendance at meetings or consultations with other professionals which you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, or the time required to perform any other service which you may request. In unusual circumstances, you may become involved in a litigation which may require our participation. You will be expected to pay for the professional time required even if your therapist is compelled to testify by another party.

Full payment is due at each session (unless you are covered by a managed care insurance that we participate with). Please make out your check **before the session begins**. Checks should be made payable to **NHPA** or can be stamped. A \$3.00 monthly rebilling fee will be charged to all overdue accounts.

BILLING & INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources are available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health benefits policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment **if you meet criteria for a mental health diagnosis**. We will provide you with whatever assistance we can in facilitating your receipt of the benefits to which you are entitled including submitting forms for managed care insurance plans. However, you, and not your insurance company, are responsible for full payment of the fee which we have agreed to. Therefore, it is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers.

Many health insurance policies cover mental health services. Nevertheless, the reimbursement varies considerably from company to company, and from policy to policy. Also, most policies have annual deductibles, copayments, or other benefit limits. Please read your policy carefully to be aware of your coverage. We recommend that you call your employer's Personnel Department or the insurance company to inquire about your benefits. Ask specifically what is covered for outpatient mental health treatment and any specific limitations or requirements regarding providers of service. This is quite important since you are responsible for payment of services which your insurance may not cover.

Payment for services is due **at the time services are rendered** unless payment arrangements have been approved in advance by our staff or unless you have insurance coverage which requires another arrangement. We accept cash, checks, and major credit cards. If payment is not made at the time of service, a fee of \$10 will be charged to your account.

Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to at the time these services are requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, we may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or installment payment plan. A fee of \$25 will be charged for checks returned for insufficient funds.

We do not routinely file insurance forms, **except for contracted managed care companies**. You will be provided with a monthly statement that has all the necessary information for you to submit for insurance reimbursement. If you have questions regarding this, or specific needs, please discuss this with your clinician. In cases where we participate with your insurance, we will accept assignment of insurance benefits.

"Managed Health Care Plans" such as HMOs and PPOs often require advance authorization before they will provide reimbursement for mental health services. These plans are often oriented toward a short-term treatment approach designed to resolve specific

problems that are interfering with one's usual level of functioning. It may be necessary to seek additional approval after a certain number of sessions. In our experience, while quite a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy; many clients feel that more services are necessary after insurance benefits expire. If this is the case, we will do our best to explore options that allow you to continue your psychotherapy.

You should also be aware that most insurance agreements require you to authorize us to provide a clinical diagnosis, and sometimes additional clinical information such as a treatment plan or summary, or in rare cases, a copy of the entire record. This information will become part of the insurance company files, and, in all probability, some if it will be computerized. All insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, but once it is in their hands, we have no control over what they do with it. In some cases they may share the information with a national medical information data bank. If you request it, we will provide you with a copy of any report which we submit.

Once we have all of the information about your insurance coverage, we will discuss what we can expect to accomplish with the benefits that are available and what will happen if the insurance benefits run out before you feel ready to end our sessions. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for our services yourself and avoid the complexities which are described above. We will gladly discuss your proposed treatment and answer any questions relating to your insurance.

You must realize, however, that:

1. Your insurance is a contract between you, your employer and the insurance company. Unless your insurance is a managed care company with which we participate, we are not a party to that contract.
2. Our fees are generally considered to fall within the acceptable range by most companies, and therefore are covered up to the maximum allowance determined by each carrier. This applies only to companies who pay a percentage (such as 50%, or 80%) of "U.C.R.". "U.C.R." is defined as usual, customary and reasonable fees for this region. Thus, our fees are considered usual, customary and reasonable by most companies. This statement does not apply to companies who reimburse based on an arbitrary "schedule" of fees, which bears no relationship to the current standard and cost of care in this area.
3. Not all services are a covered benefit in all contracts. Some insurance companies arbitrarily select certain services or diagnosis they will not cover.
4. If you have a managed care insurance plan and you do not call for initial authorization, if required by your plan, before the first appointment, you will be responsible for any charges that your plan refuses to cover.

We must emphasize that as mental health care providers, our relationship is with you, not your insurance company. While the providing of statements for filing insurance claims is a courtesy that we extend to our patients, all charges are your responsibility from the date the services are rendered. We realize that temporary financial problems may affect timely payment of your account. If such problems do arise, we encourage you to contact us promptly for assistance in the management of your account.

If your account is more than 60 days in arrears and suitable arrangements for payment have not been agreed to, we have the option of using legal means to secure payment, including collection agencies or small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, the costs of bringing that proceeding will be included in the claim. In most cases, the only information which we release about a client's treatment would be the client's name, identifying data, the nature of the services provided and the amount due.

If you have any questions about the above information, PLEASE don't hesitate to ask us. We are here to help you.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

As you may be aware, your therapist is required to keep appropriate records of the professional services provided. Because these records contain information which could be misinterpreted by someone who is not a mental health professional, it is our general policy that clients may only review them in the presence of their therapist. However, if requested, you will be provided with a treatment summary unless it is believed that to do so would be emotionally damaging. If that is the case, we will be happy to forward the summary to another appropriate mental health professional who is working with you. There may be an additional charge for this service.

MINORS

If you are less than eighteen years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents with the right to examine your treatment records. It is our policy to request an agreement from parents that they consent to give up access to your records. If they agree, we will provide them only with general information on how your treatment is proceeding unless your therapist feels that there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or another, in which case your therapist will notify them of this concern. We will also provide them with a summary of your treatment when it is complete. Before giving them any information, your therapist will discuss the matter with you and will do the best they can to resolve any objections you may have about what will be discussed.

APPOINTMENTS

Our normal practice is to conduct an initial evaluation which will last from 1 to 3 sessions. During this time, you and your therapist can both decide whether he or she is the best person to provide the services which you need in order to meet your treatment objectives. If psychotherapy is initiated, we will usually schedule one 53 minute session (one appointment hour of 53 minutes duration) per week at a mutually agreed upon time, although sometimes sessions will be more or less frequent. Once this appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide twenty-four hours advance notice of cancellation, or unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances which were beyond your control. If it is possible, we will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment. Because this time is set aside just for you, it is important for you to keep your appointment.

A fee of \$25 will be charged for each cancellation without 24 hours notice. Also, please don't No Show. A No Show appointment is one you fail to keep. If you no show for your appointment, a \$50 fee will be charged.

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours are by appointment only. Every effort is made to provide evening and weekend hours, when needed. Most appointments can be scheduled within 48 hours. Same day appointments are generally possible in cases of emergency. When calling, you may reach either the receptionist, office manager or the voice mail. When using voice mail, please leave a message in the appropriate mailbox, and your call will be returned during business hours.

EMERGENCY

In case of an emergency please call the office at 724-759-7500. If there is no one available to answer your call, press option 1 to be connected to a clinician on call. You may also contact the Resolve Crisis Network at 1-888-796-8226 or call 911.

CONTACTING YOUR THERAPIST

Therapists are often not immediately available by telephone. While the office is open 6 days per week, your therapist will not answer the phone while with a client. When a therapist is unavailable, the telephone is answered either by office staff or an automated voice mail system. We will make every effort to return your call on the same day, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please leave some times when you will be available. If you cannot reach your therapist, and you feel that you cannot wait for the return call, you should use the emergency option on the voice mail, call the Resolve Crisis Network at 1-888-796-8226, call 911, call your family physician, or call the emergency room at the nearest hospital and ask for the clinician on call. If your therapist is unavailable for an extended time, coverage will be provided by the on-call clinician as needed.

NOTICE OF TERMINATION

You are not obligated to see your therapist any specified number of sessions. It is important, however, to give your therapist one session's notice of your intent to end therapy. In order to address termination issues, we ask you to avoid a situation where you would cancel and then not reschedule without explanation.

DIVERSITY

In principle and practice, NHPA values and seeks a diverse staff and client population. We do not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or class.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

NORTH HILLS PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES, INC.

10475 Perry Highway
Town Centre, Suite 110
Wexford, PA 15090
724-759-7500
FAX : 724-759-7600

200 Cedar Ridge Drive
Suite 204
Pittsburgh, PA 15205
724-759-7500
www.nhpa.com

6315 Forbes Avenue
Maxon Towers, Suite B13
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
724-759-7500
Email : nhpaweb@nhpa.com