

Stone Counseling & Consulting Services, LLC

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SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FOR IN-PERSON SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

INTRODUCTION

Stone Counseling & Consulting Services, LLC (herein referred to by name or as “business”) is a counseling and consulting private practice owned and operated by Rebecca L. Stone, M.A., LMHC (herein referred to by name, respective pronouns, or as “counselor”).

This is a voluntary supplemental consent form which contains important information about our decision (yours and mine) to utilize in-person services during the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic. Specifics related to in-person services during the COVID-19 pandemic only are outlined below. Read this document carefully and discuss any questions or concerns prior to completion. When you sign this document, it will be an official agreement between us. Completion of this consent form does not preclude you from utilizing telehealth services.

Note: The terms outlined in Stone Counseling & Consulting Services’ *Professional Service Agreement: Informed Consent for Counseling Services*, which you complete by or before your first counseling session and the beginning of each subsequent year, also apply. For telehealth services, the terms outlined in the *Supplemental Informed Consent for Treatment via Online Counseling* consent also apply. Please refer to those documents as needed for additional information.

BACKGROUND

While telehealth (online) appointments have always been and will continue to be available at Stone Counseling & Consulting Services, LLC, they were previously available by the client’s choice so long as online appointments were clinically appropriate and a supplemental consent for telehealth services was completed.

Beginning March 2020, all client appointments were shifted online in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations to minimize risk of contracting and/or spreading COVID-19 for the health and safety of all. Some clients shifted online with relative ease whereas others have found online sessions difficult for a variety of reasons. As the CDC’s recommendations have changed and more people are becoming vaccinated, some clients may wish to resume in-person services.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SESSION DELIVERY

Given the uncertainty of the pandemic, telehealth sessions remain the safest session delivery method for supporting physical health and minimizing potential transmission of COVID-19.

For those who are interested in seeking in-person sessions, we must be mindful of our decisions around session delivery methods by continuously weighing the potential risks and benefits of meeting in-person and taking steps to minimize risks of virus exposure or transmission. Some considerations follow, although this is not a comprehensive list:

- **Mental Health:** Some clients may benefit from resuming in-person therapy, such as those who appear to be worsening or are in acute crisis, and those who need a more intense level of care that is not being met via telehealth sessions.

- **Physical Health:** Considerations must be made as to the health of the client and whether their occupation, health status, or behaviors put them at heightened risk of contracting the virus and/or spreading it through an in-person visit. Also, considerations must be made for clients who may be at greater risk of severe illness should they contract COVID-19. For those who are sensitive to sanitizing/disinfecting products and/or strong scents, considerations for the increased use of these products in-office and their impacts on your health (such as allergies, headaches, etc.) must be considered. If circumstances such as these are of concern, telehealth may continue to be advised.
- **Health Insurance Coverage:** Currently, most insurance companies are covering telehealth appointments. As the landscape of COVID-19 changes, however, insurance companies may decide to continue or discontinue coverage/payment/reimbursement for telehealth appointments. This may be an issue we may need to consider and discuss.

MY COMMITMENT TO MINIMIZE EXPOSURE

Supporting the health and safety of all involved is important to me. Given this, it is important to take appropriate precautions. In doing so, the following procedure has been developed:

- **New clients:** All new clients will be seen exclusively via telehealth until it is determined that in-person appointments are an option.
- **Returning clients:** Former clients who have taken a break from services and are now returning for services will also be seen exclusively via telehealth until it is determined that in-person appointments are an option.
- **Current clients:** Existing clients who are interested in seeking in-person appointments will need to discuss their desire for in-person appointments during a telehealth appointment, weigh the potential risks and benefits, and complete this consent form prior to being seen in-office.
- **Vaccinations:** COVID-19 vaccinations for clients are encouraged (with your physician's guidance) but not required. Immunity and transmission of COVID-19 (or other communicable viruses/diseases) cannot be guaranteed with vaccines; however, they are a helpful precaution. Rebecca Stone has received both doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in accordance with that vaccine's protocols and is committed to maintaining that vaccination provided it is advisable for her health to do so.
- **Office precautions:** In-person appointments are available only with advanced discussion and additional consent, and by pre-scheduled appointment only (walk-in appointments are not available). Safety precautions will be taken and enforced for in-person appointments.

OFFICE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS IN EFFECT DURING THE PANDEMIC

The following precautions are in effect to help protect our clients and help minimize the spread of the COVID-19 and may be subject to change.

- The exterior door will remain locked from the exterior to prevent clients from entering prior to the office being vacated and sanitized between clients.
- The waiting area is closed as it is not a large enough for safe distancing in relation to the office doors.
- All clients are asked to wait in their vehicle or outside until their appointment start time.
- Office seating is arranged for appropriate safe distancing.
- Non-essential items, such as blankets, will be stored to minimize items/surfaces for sanitizing.
- Masks or other personal protection equipment are to be worn by all parties when safe distancing is not possible. Disposable masks are available if needed.
- Staff and clients maintain safe distancing.
- Physical contact is not permitted.
- Session end times will be followed in support of physical distancing and to ensure time for sanitizing.

- Contactless payment methods are available and encouraged.
- Hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol is available in the office.
- Restroom soap dispensers are maintained, and everyone is encouraged to wash their hands.
- Tissues and trash bins are easily accessible. Trash is disposed of on a frequent basis.
- Commonly touched surfaces are sanitized after each use.
- Common areas are thoroughly disinfected at the end of each day.
- HEPA air filtration is used in the office.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MINIMIZE EXPOSURE

To obtain services in person, you agree to take certain precautions which will help keep everyone (you, me, our families, other clients, and the community) safer from exposure, sickness, and possible death. If you do not adhere to these safeguards, it may result in our return to telehealth sessions. Initial each to indicate that you understand and agree to these actions for each in-person session:

- You will arrive for pre-scheduled in-person appointments only; walk-in appointments are not available.
- You will only keep your in-person appointment if you are symptom free.
- You will take your temperature before coming to each appointment. If it is elevated (100 degrees Fahrenheit or more), if you feel ill, or if you have symptoms of COVID-19, you agree to change the appointment to telehealth or cancel the appointment with as much notice as possible. If you wish to cancel for this reason, I will not charge you our normal cancellation fee. No show fees may still apply.
- You will wait in your vehicle or outside until your session start time, as there is no space in the waiting area for recommended safe distancing.
- You will wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when you enter the building.
- You will adhere to the safe distancing precautions. For example, you won't move chairs or sit where we have signs asking you not to sit.
- You will wear a mask in all areas of the office where safe distancing is unable to be maintained.
- You will keep a distance of 6 feet and there will be no physical contact (e.g. no shaking hands) with me.
- You will try not to touch your face or eyes with your hands. If you do, you will immediately wash or sanitize your hands.
- Members of your support network will not be permitted to attend in-person sessions with you as guests.
- You will take steps between appointments to minimize your exposure to COVID-19.
- If you have a job that exposes you to other people who are infected, you will immediately let me know.
- If your commute or other responsibilities or activities put you in close contact with others (beyond your family), you will let me know.
- If you or a resident of your home tests positive for COVID-19, you will immediately let me know and we will then resume treatment via telehealth.

The precautions may be changed without advanced notice if additional local, state, or federal orders or guidelines are published, or if it is otherwise determined that the existing precautions are in need of change. If that happens, any necessary changes will be discussed as soon as possible.

IF YOU OR I ARE SICK

You understand that I am committed to keeping you, me, our families, and the larger community safe from the spread of this virus. If you show up for an appointment and I believe that you have a fever or other symptoms, or believe you have been exposed, I will have to require you to leave the office immediately. We can follow up with services by telehealth as appropriate.

If I feel ill, or if I or a member of my family is suspected or known to have COVID-19, I will move all in-person appointments to telehealth appointments until clearance is given. If I test positive for COVID-19, I notify clients who were seen in-person appropriate precautions can be taken.

YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CASE OF INFECTION

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, please notify me right away so appropriate steps can be taken.

If I am notified that any client who has been seen in the office for in-person sessions tests positive for COVID-19, I will notify all other clients who may have potentially been exposed through my office. A basic statement will be communicated, without any personally identifiable details of the COVID-19 positive client, to those potentially affected so that those other clients may take precautions for their health and wellbeing.

I may be required to notify local health authorities that you have been in the office. If I must report this, I will only provide the minimum information necessary for their data collection and will not go into any details about the reason(s) for our visits. By signing this form, you are agreeing that I may do so without an additional signed release.

DECISION TO MEET IN-PERSON

We have agreed to meet in person for some or all future sessions. If there is a resurgence of the pandemic or if other health concerns arise, however, I may require that we meet via telehealth. If you have concerns about meeting through telehealth, we will talk about it first and try to address any issues. You understand that, if I believe it is necessary, I may determine that we return to telehealth for everyone's well-being.

If you decide at any time that you would feel safer continuing with or resuming telehealth services, I will support and respect that decision if it is feasible and clinically appropriate. Coverage or reimbursement for telehealth services will be determined by the insurance companies and applicable law, so your financial responsibility for telehealth sessions may change accordingly.

Given the landscape of the pandemic, the option to meet in-person during COVID-19 or a public health crisis is contingent on CDC and other applicable laws, rules, orders, or recommendations and may be altered or revoked at any time without advanced notice.

ASSUMPTION OF RISKS OF OPTING FOR IN-PERSON SERVICES

Exposure to and/or contracting COVID-19 can lead to serious health conditions up to and including death. You understand that by coming to the office, you are assuming the risk of potentially being exposed to or contracting COVID-19 (or other public health risks). This risk may increase if you travel by public transportation, cab, or ridesharing service.

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING AND CONSENT

I have thoroughly read and understand the information contained in this document and any referenced document(s), and I consent to receiving voluntary treatment in-person with Stone Counseling & Consulting Services. I also understand that, if I have any questions or concerns about the provided information or treatment, I have the right to discuss them with my counselor at any time. Additionally, I

hereby authorize the collection, disclosure, and use of any identifying data required by law or executive order to comply with any COVID-19 reporting requirements and/or contact tracing.

****This is a copy of the policy/procedures and consent for informational purposes only. Signature on this unofficial document is not appropriate nor binding. If you are interested in seeking in-person services, please discuss this in advance during a telehealth session. If in-person appointments are an option for you, this consent form will be electronically sent to you for completion/signature via a Client Portal form. That electronic form must be completed prior to in-person services beginning. ****

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UNOFFICIAL DOCUMENT