

## **INFORMED CONSENT FOR ASSESSMENT SERVICES USC PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES CENTER**

Welcome to USC's Psychology Services Center (hereafter referred to as the "Center"). This document explains several important aspects of assessment at the Center, including assessment provided on-site and off-site by our assessors. Although this document is long and complex, it is important you read it carefully and ask any questions you might have. We will give you a copy to take home.

### **SUPERVISION AND TRAINING**

With rare exceptions, all providers of service (assessors) at the Center are USC graduate students who are working toward graduate degrees in Psychology. They provide services under the supervision of USC Faculty and/or CA licensed mental health professionals. Your assessor should provide you with a business card complete with their name, the name of their supervisor, and the supervisor's phone number at your first session.

Your [your child's] assessment will be discussed with the supervisor, and often with other student trainees. Recording of sessions is standard practice at the Center, and by signing this consent form, you agree to be recorded as part of your [your child's] assessment at the clinic. The purpose of recording and supervision is to allow assessors to provide the best possible service to you as the client. Video is recorded digitally and stored on a secure server. Sessions will be deleted after the completion of your assessment and assessment feedback.

### **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

First and foremost, you should understand that seeking an assessment is not a guarantee of the following: 1) we may not be able to conclude that you [your child] have the diagnosis you are seeking testing for; 2) we cannot guarantee testing results/our report will result in accommodations in an educational or standardized testing situation.

It is the client's responsibility to obtain the necessary information required for us to perform the assessment consistent with the standards of your institution. For instance, some institutions/testing companies do not accept testing performed by trainees. Other institutions/testing companies have particular tests or information that they require to be included in the assessment in order to accept the report. Clients must contact the relevant agency they want to submit the report to and obtain the agency's standards for testing. It is also helpful if you can provide contact information for the agency you wish to submit the report to, so that we can follow up with any questions if necessary.

Most assessments require a significant amount of information from the client in addition to the testing performed in the clinic. Frequently, we request that you obtain school records, prior testing reports, IEP/504 reports/plans, and any other relevant documentation to your testing concern. We may also request you sign release forms so that we can obtain information from other relevant individuals, such as parents/caretakers, school officials/teachers, and physicians or other treatment providers. This information will help your assessor obtain a complete picture of how you are performing in school, work and home environments, which will assist in providing the most accurate diagnosis and recommendations.



Please try to respond to these requests as quickly as you can, as we can often not proceed with the report until we have this information.

In addition to the lengthy interview and information gathering described above, you will be asked to complete a variety of standardized tests in the clinic. The specific tests you are asked to complete will depend on the problems/concerns you describe to your assessor. We tailor our assessments to each individual, so it is possible you will be asked to come back to the Center after the assessor has had the opportunity to score some of your tests and consult with his/her supervisor. Sometimes we find it necessary to request additional information or testing before drawing conclusions about your difficulty.

### **FEEDBACK AND REPORT TIMELINE**

As our assessors are in training, we cannot guarantee a particular timeline for a report. If you need an assessment completed by a particular date, we may recommend that you obtain the assessment with a different provider. Please discuss this issue with your assessor at the first appointment. However, our assessors do make an effort to complete reports by 5-6 weeks after your last assessment appointment. Clients should understand that much of the information they reveal to the assessor will be described in the report. While we make an effort to only include information that is relevant to making or ruling out a diagnosis (e.g., we would not describe a traumatic event that occurred in your life if it did not relate to your diagnosis, and even then we would make an effort to protect your confidentiality), we cannot guarantee what information would or would not be included in the report.

When the report is completed, we will contact you and request an appointment for a feedback session. During the feedback session, the assessor will provide you with a detailed account of your testing results, diagnostic conclusions, and recommendations. This is a great opportunity for you to ask any questions you have about the report as well. We do not issue the report without a feedback session; we feel it is essential to convey the information directly to the client since reports often use technical language.

### **APPOINTMENTS AND FEES**

The length of assessment sessions vary widely. Your schedule, your assessor's schedule, and your ability to concentrate for extended periods of time are all taken into account in determining the length of assessment sessions. Typically, however, a time period of at least 2 hours is needed for each appointment.

Missed sessions and late arrivals are problematic for both clients and assessors. Therefore, we ask clients to make a commitment to attend all of their scheduled appointments to complete the assessment as quickly as possible. Center policy on missed and late appointments is as follows:

- 1) You should provide at least 24 hours advance notice of cancellation. Failure to do so for 2 consecutive appointments may result in the termination of assessment services.
- 2) If you are more than 15 minutes late without prior notice, your assessor will assume that you have had to cancel the session and may leave the Center.
- 3) If you have cancelled or missed a session, it is your responsibility to contact the assessor to reschedule.
- 4) If you miss two or more sessions in a row, without calling to cancel or reschedule, your assessor will try to contact you by phone. If you do not respond, we will assume that you no longer desire to complete the assessment, and we will initiate termination of our services by letter. Please note that this may affect your ability to complete a successful assessment in the future, as appointments typically need to be scheduled close together in time for the assessment to be considered valid.

The standard fee for an assessment is a flat rate of \$500. This fee includes all assessment appointments, all outside consultation (e.g., assessor speaking to parents, schools, doctors), scoring and interpretation of test results, the written report, and a feedback session to explain the results to you. This fee is markedly below services in the community (typically in the \$1200-\$3000 range). If you experience extreme financial hardship, you may apply for a lower fee, and provide evidence of your financial circumstances. We do not bill insurance companies, and most insurance companies will not reimburse services provided at the

Center since our clinicians are in training. Clients can pay the rate in full or request a payment plan. You may pay by cash or check, but please note we do not keep cash on the premises to provide change.

We are dedicated to establishing a safe environment that fosters open and honest communication. You may terminate services at any time. You are invited to discuss any concerns you may have about your [your child's] assessment or the services provided with your therapist and/or your therapist's supervisor. Every client has the right to complain if they feel they have received unethical services. The Department of Consumer Affairs Board of Psychology receives and responds to questions and complaints regarding the practice of psychology. If you have questions or complaints, you may contact the board on the Internet at [www.psychboard.ca.gov](http://www.psychboard.ca.gov), by calling 1-866-503-3221, or by writing to the following address: Board of Psychology, 1625 N Market Street, Suite N-215, Sacramento, California 95815.

### **CONTACTING YOUR ASSESSOR**

Generally, a staff member is available to answer phones during Center hours (Monday-Thursday, 9am-8pm, Fridays (academic year only), 9am-5pm). However, due to staff absences, staff answering other phone calls, etc., it may be necessary for you to leave a message. No assessor can be contacted directly. However, your message on the Center voicemail will be delivered to your therapist as promptly as possible. As the assessors in the clinic are graduate students at USC, it may take time before they can call you back. However, most assessors are able to return your call within 1 business day (M-F during the academic year, M-TH during the summer). Please note the clinic is also closed at various points of the year for university holidays and school breaks. Your assessor will inform you of these dates or other dates they are unavailable in advance, and you can also find an up-to-date listing of Center closures on our website (<http://dornsife.usc.edu/usc-psc>).

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In most situations, it is not permissible for assessors to release information about your assessment to others unless you have signed a written authorization form. However, there are a few important exceptions to this confidentiality which are outlined below.

- Since this is a teaching clinic, information about your case is shared with other students, faculty, and supervisors, who are all required to follow the same confidentiality procedures as your assessor. In addition, it may be necessary to consult with another mental health professional. In this instance, every effort is made to keep your identity confidential during the consultation, and these professionals are also required to maintain confidentiality.
- When the Center is reviewed by accrediting agencies, the agencies may examine random files for completeness and adherence to professional standards.
- If you become a danger to yourself or others, we may have to reveal information about you to other mental health professionals, family members, and/or emergency services.
- If ordered to do so by a judge, we may have to release protected health information to the court.
- If a client files a complaint or lawsuit against an assessor, relevant information regarding that client may be disclosed for the assessor's defense.
- If an assessor has any knowledge, or suspicion, of child or elderly/dependent adult abuse or neglect, the law requires that we file a report with the appropriate government agency. This mandate includes if you reveal any instances of abuse or neglect on the part of yourself, others you know, family members, etc. Domestic violence in some instances is also considered reportable when observed by children. In most instances, the assessor will discuss the necessity of filing a report before they do so.

### **RESEARCH AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

Your [your child's] clinical materials, such as documents information obtained through assessment may be used for program management, research, and training purposes. Confidentiality is protected by restricting access to these materials. Case records are securely stored, and access is only granted to individuals engaged in training at the clinic, and those approved to do so by the University Institutional Review Board. Names and identifying information will be removed from clinical materials prior to their use in training, research, and/or scientific publication. Any client who is asked to participate in a research study will not

be penalized if they choose not to participate (i.e., services at the Center are not withheld as a result of declining research participation). You may opt in or opt out of being contacted for research on the signature page.

**SIGNATURE**

***Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship. Your initials next to each item below highlights the major points of this document to which you are agreeing. If you have any questions or are unclear about any policy, please feel free to discuss with your assessor.***

- \_\_\_ I understand that my assessor is in training for a mental-health related degree and is under supervision.
  
- \_\_\_ I understand that I (and/or my child) will be recorded as part of my assessment at the Center.
  
- \_\_\_ I have read and understood the limits to confidentiality.
  
- \_\_\_ I have read and understood the policies about missed sessions/cancelling without advance notice, and I understand that failure to cancel sessions appropriately, or frequent cancellations, no-shows or late arrivals may result in the termination of services at the Center.
  
- \_\_\_ I give my consent to be contacted about clinic research.
- \_\_\_ I do not want to hear about clinic research opportunities.

Client Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Client Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Client Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Client Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Assessor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Assessor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_