



## **Palmetto Family Works, LLC**

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### **Parent/ Guardian Agreement**

Your child may find counseling very beneficial in working through the difficulties they are experiencing. Often, the child will be seen individually, with parents, and/ or other family members. The general goal of counseling is to support their overall health, development, and wellbeing. At times, it may seem that a specific behavioral change is in order, such as to get a child to obey, or to reveal specific information. Although those objectives may be important, they may not be beneficial to the process of counseling for the child. After an assessment, the treatment plan will be proposed, and discussed prior to beginning ongoing counseling.

Potential benefits a child may experience from participating in counseling after forming a therapeutic alliance:

- Allowing to express strong feelings openly and honestly in an emotionally neutral setting
- Learning how to cope with family transitions (i.e. divorce, moves, etc)
- Understanding how to handle difficult situations and relationships
- Improving communication with family, friends, and others.

**Parental Involvement** is very important when enrolling a child in counseling. Unless there has been a court proceeding to terminate a parent's rights, or a family court action that allows for one parent to have sole custody or decision-making authority, it is presumed that both parents have equal access to a child's counseling record. Both parents are to be in agreement with counseling services before proceeding. In cases where there is a court order that dictates who may make decisions, and/ or be involved in counseling, a copy of the order is to be provided at the outset of services. Services cannot be provided if one parent is not in agreement. Counseling becomes limited in its usefulness when it is simply another matter of dispute between parents. Any matter brought to my attention by either parent will be entered into the child's record, which is then available to the other parent.

Parents are asked not to disclose to the counselor in front of the child a "laundry list" of problems as this can cause problems with building the therapeutic alliance. Parents will be provided with an opportunity prior to/ or during the initial assessment to provide much of this information. Parents are encouraged to email the counselor with non-emergency information between sessions if updates are warranted. Family therapy sessions may also be used during the course of treatment to address family dynamics/ relationship issues.

**Confidentiality** is an issue when working with minors, because parents are entitled to their minor child's medical information. Unfortunately, some children will not work with the counselor unless they feel that they have some degree of confidentiality. Parents are asked to affirm that the counselor is the child's helper, and not expected to report all of the session's details verbatim. An agreement for what may be kept confidential may help facilitate an expectation of privacy for the child, and further assist in the development of rapport between the child and the counselor. *Exceptions to confidentiality are covered in the Consent/ Disclosure Statement, and apply to both minors and adults.*

**Legal/ Custody Concerns** are often brought up in counseling sessions. As the counselor for the child, it is outside of my role to be involved in court proceedings, unless compelled to do so by a judge. Custody and mediation matters are best handled by an attorney, guardian ad litem, or forensic mental health professional.

**Palmetto Family Works LLC does not provide expert witness services for divorce, custody, or other legal disputes.** If under a judge's order, the counselor is compelled to appear for court or mediation, the fees for appearance, pre-trial conferences, travel, and/ or records preparation will be assessed to the parents as outlined in the Consent/ Disclosure Statement.

I (name) \_\_\_\_\_ (relationship) \_\_\_\_\_

I (name) \_\_\_\_\_ (relationship) \_\_\_\_\_

Agree that my/ our child \_\_\_\_\_ may have privacy in his/ her counseling sessions, and I agree to allow this privacy except in the conditions previously outlined. I understand that I have a right to obtain this information, but will do my best to ensure that counseling sessions are able to be attended without questioning about the content. If my child prefers not to volunteer information about sessions, I will respect his/ her right not to disclose details.

The counselor will inform me if sessions are attended, if my child is participating, and if my child is making progress. The counselor will communicate any concerns about safety or wellbeing to me. Likewise, I will communicate these same types of issues to the counselor.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_