



PATIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT

Welcome!

Welcome to Ruah Woods Psychological Services (RWPS), an outreach of Ruah Woods, a Catholic nonprofit ministry founded in 2009. Ruah Woods seeks to help men and women live their vocation to love, according to God's plan, as informed by the Theology of the Body. RWPS aids this mission by developing and providing high quality psychological services grounded in the Catholic vision of the human person to empower people to more fully embrace and live out their vocation to love according to God's plan. The services we provide include psychotherapy (child, adult, marital/family, group therapy), psychological assessments, vocational assessments, consultation/dialogue with mental health professionals, training/mentoring aspiring Catholic psychologists, and psychoeducation (writing, teaching, public speaking, etc.). Although our services are available to anyone regardless of religious affiliation or belief, RWPS therapists may incorporate and will follow Catholic doctrine and Catholic moral teaching in their provision of these services.

Terminology

In this document, we use the term "patient" to refer to anyone who is receiving professional psychological services from RWPS. These services could be therapeutic (e.g., adult therapy, marital therapy, etc.) or evaluative (e.g., psychological testing) in nature. We also use the term "therapist" to refer to an employee of RWPS who is providing professional psychological services, regardless of what services are being provided.

Online Patient Portal

RWPS uses a cloud-based, electronic practice management system. This system features a Patient Portal, which has several features that will be of use to you. Through the Patient Portal you may:

- Enter or modify your contact and financial information
- Complete a biographical information form
- Schedule and cancel appointments
- View financial statements
- Make payments
- Send a secure (encrypted) message to your therapist.

We urge you to familiarize yourself with these features. The Patient Portal can most easily be accessed by going to the RWPS website (www.RWpsych.org), and clicking on the words "Patient Portal" in the upper right portion of the screen. You will then be directed to a page where you can click on the name of your RWPS therapist and log in to the Patient Portal. If you have any trouble logging into your Patient Portal account (e.g., you cannot find the correct page, cannot remember your login information, etc.), please contact the RWPS front desk at 513-407-8878.

Therapeutic Contract and Informed Consent

When you receive psychological services from a mental health therapist, you enter into a therapeutic contract. This Patient Services Agreement is designed to make this contract explicit and contains important information about RWPS policies and procedures. Please read it carefully and discuss any questions or concerns you have with your therapist. Additional information regarding our privacy policies and how we handle your Protected Health Information (PHI) can be found in our Notice of Privacy Practices. We require your consent to the information contained in these two documents before entering into a professional relationship with you as our patient. You have the right to withhold consent from us. However, if you choose to do so, we will be unable to provide you services. In such a case, we would offer to refer you to another provider. Similarly, you have

the right to revoke your consent from us in writing at any time. At that point, we will have to stop providing services to you, unless we are otherwise legally obligated to provide services. We are permitted to seek any outstanding payments for services we provided to you prior to your consent being revoked. This is further described in our Notice of Privacy Practices.

Working with a Minor

We believe the involvement of parents is very important and helpful in working with children. If the patient is a minor (i.e., a child under the age of 18 years old), his/her parent or guardian must give consent for us to provide services to him/her. In addition to giving their consent, we ask that parents take an active role in any treatment or evaluation we provide to their child. In some cases, it may be advantageous to work individually with an older child and we may ask that parents afford such a child a certain amount of privacy. Nonetheless, we will seek to keep the parents informed about how the work is going and any major risk issues that arise. We will negotiate the precise boundaries regarding the child's privacy on a case-by-case basis.

As explained in our Notice of Privacy Practices, Ohio Law also allows a minor 14 years of age or older to obtain a limited amount of psychological treatment (6 sessions or 30 days of service, whichever occurs first) without his/her parent/guardian's knowledge or consent. In such a case, we will review these issues with the minor and ask him/her to sign the consent form. We will also explore the minor's reasons for seeking our services without parental knowledge and the appropriateness of this rationale. Once the 6-session or 30-day limit on our services is reached, we will either stop providing services or obtain consent from the parents/guardians to continue. If, at any time while treating such a minor, we believe that he/she is at substantial risk of incurring harm to self or to another person, the law permits us to inform the parents/guardians without the minor's consent as long as we inform the minor of our intention to do so. We will exercise this legal right.

Couples' Therapy

When working with a couple, we will seek the informed consent of both adults to enter into a therapeutic contract. In such cases, we consider the relationship to be the primary patient. However, in most cases, we will file clinical notes and conduct billing under the name of the spouse/partner that initiated our services. We encourage you as a couple to decide under which partner's name you would like us to file clinical notes and bill fees for any couples' sessions. Please be advised that since this individual will be the "identified patient," all decisions regarding treatment, billing, clinical records, and the like must involve this person's consent or authorization. However, whenever possible, we will seek the consent or authorization of both parties. Please note that we do not perform or participate in custody evaluations or divorce proceedings.

Scheduling and Cancelling Appointments

At RWPS, appointments can be scheduled using the online program described above. This program allows patients to schedule appointments using the user name and password established when you schedule your first appointment. However, the first appointment (a 90-minute clinical interview) cannot be scheduled online and must be scheduled by calling the RWPS front desk at 513-407-8878. After the first appointment, you will then be free to use the online scheduling program via the Patient Portal. If you are not comfortable making appointments online or do not have access to the Patient Portal, you may schedule appointments with the RWPS front desk in person or via telephone.

Please note that while the scheduling program uses one hour increments, appointments normally last **50 minutes**. This allows the therapist a short break in between sessions to complete clinical notes, attend to personal or administrative matters, prepare for the next patient, refresh, etc. Please help us respect the 50-minute length of sessions, so that we can continue to provide a high level of care to all our patients. In addition, some services may require more than 50 minutes (e.g., initial intake interviews, group therapy sessions, psychological testing). Such appointments must be scheduled by the RWPS front desk or an RWPS therapist.

An appointment is a joint commitment to our work. We ask that you work together with us to start and end appointments on time and to make the most of the time we have together. If we are ever unable to start on

time, we ask your understanding. If possible, you will receive the full time (e.g., 50 minutes) you had scheduled. If you are late, we may be unable to meet for the full time due to scheduling constraints. Similarly, we ask that you respect the time limits of our sessions.

We consider our meetings very important and ask you to do the same. Cancelling or missing appointments delays your progress. Please try not to miss sessions if you can possibly help it. However, we understand that scheduling conflicts commonly occur, and we encourage you to use the online scheduling program available via the Patient Portal to reschedule appointments as need. Since we have a limited number of appointment slots to offer, RWPS requires at least 24 hours advance notice of cancellations for scheduled appointments. If it is within 24 hours of your scheduled appointment, the online scheduling program will not allow you to cancel. To cancel or re-schedule an appointment within the 24 hour period, you may call the RWPS front desk at 513-407-8878. Except for unpredictable emergencies (i.e., a situation that both of us would regard as an unpredictable emergency), canceling an appointment with less than 24 hour notice or failing to show up for an appointment may result in incurring a “Late Cancel / No Show” fee of \$70. This fee is not reimbursable by insurance.

Contacting Your Therapist

The best way to communicate with your RWPS therapist is during your regularly scheduled appointment. If you need to contact us outside of this time, you are welcome to call our office at 513-407-8878. The front desk can handle a wide range of issues related to scheduling, billing, and related administrative tasks. If you have a question or issue that only your therapist can address, you may ask to speak with your therapist or select his/her extension from the menu. We ask that you keep these phone calls brief. We reserve the right to charge a reasonable fee for phone calls that exceed 15 minutes. If we are unavailable to take your call, you are welcome to leave a voicemail. If you leave a valid phone number, we will return your call as soon as possible. If we are unable to reach you when returning your call, we will leave a message unless you instruct us not to.

Another means of contacting your therapist is through the secure (encrypted) e-mail function in the Patient Portal. This allows you to send a private text-based message to your therapist. Your therapist can then read and respond to your message, if necessary. However, please be advised that your therapist may not be able to respond immediately, especially if he/she is travelling and/or away from computer access. While this electronic medium can be a helpful supplement to conversations with your therapist in session, it cannot take the place of real, face-to-face communication.

RWPS therapists do not communicate with patients via social media, cell phone-based text messages, or standard e-mail. Please do not attempt to contact us using these insecure channels. In order to protect your confidentiality, RWPS therapists will not respond to patient attempts to communicate using these means.

If you experience a clinical emergency (e.g., are in danger of doing serious harm to yourself or another person), you may call the office during normal business hours and ask to speak with your therapist. If this occurs outside of business hours, you may use our After Hours number to reach the “on-call” therapist at **513-386-9387**. Please note that when calling the After Hours number, you will reach whichever RWPS therapist is on-call and it may not be your regular therapist. **If at any time you are experiencing a clinical emergency and you cannot reach your therapist or the on-call therapist, please call 911, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Room.**

Confidentiality and its Limits

We will treat with great care all the information you share with us. As explained in more detail in our Notice of Privacy Practices, it is your legal right that our sessions and our records about you be kept private. In general, what you discuss at RWPS will remain confidential. We will not even reveal that you are receiving our services to people outside of RWPS. However, there are some important limitations on confidentiality that we want to make sure you know about:

1. If you were sent to us by a third party (e.g., a diocese, seminary, court, or employer) for evaluation or treatment, the third party may expect a report from us. We will discuss this at the outset so that you know to what to expect.

2. If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or another person, the law requires us to try to protect you or that other person. This usually means telling others (e.g., law enforcement, other professionals, emergency personnel, family members, potential victims) about the threat. We will try to act as effectively as we can, within our legal and ethical obligations, to protect human life in these situations. This duty supersedes your right to confidentiality.
3. If you give us reasonable cause to believe that a child under age 18 (or 21 if disabled) has suffered or faces a threat of suffering abuse or neglect, we are required by law to report this to the proper law enforcement agency and/or to Ohio Child Protective Services immediately.
4. If you give us reasonable cause to believe that a vulnerable adult over age 60 is suffering abuse, neglect, or exploitation or is experiencing a condition that is the result of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, we are required by law to report this to the county department of Job and Family Services immediately.
5. If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment and the records thereof, RWPS will not release information without a court order or a written authorization from you or your personal or legally appointed representative. However, if you voluntarily testify to a court of law regarding aspects of your evaluation or treatment from RWPS, then we may be compelled to testify on those topics as well, without your authorization. Finally, if you or your representative files a claim against us regarding your treatment at RWPS, we are allowed to use your confidential information in our defense.
6. Ohio law states that if you inform us about a felony that has been committed or is being committed, we are not required to report this to law enforcement, but we are permitted to do so if we judge it to be appropriate.
7. In order to provide you with high quality services, all RWPS therapists will consult with each other about their patients and their clinical work. This allows us to learn from each other, challenge each other, and support each other so that we can serve you more effectively. This also enables us to cover for each other when we travel and to take turns covering the After Hours phone number. These consultations among RWPS therapists will be done in a discrete and professional manner.
8. We will occasionally consult with other professionals about our work with you. Receiving input from others in this fashion can help us make better judgments about how to serve you. When we do so, we reveal only the minimum amount of information needed and we take steps to conceal your identity. Furthermore, we ensure that the person with whom we are consulting is aware of the confidential nature of the information and must agree to respect your confidentiality.
9. If you are seeing other healthcare professionals, such as a primary care physician or psychiatrist, for issues relevant to the services we are providing you, it may be beneficial for us to consult with them. In many cases, we are legally permitted to do so without obtaining your explicit permission. Nonetheless, because we value your privacy, we will discuss it with you and seek your authorization before doing so.
10. If your RWPS therapist is away from the office for several days, another RWPS therapist will “cover” for him /her in case you need immediate clinical attention. However, if all RWPS therapists are away, we may enlist another psychologist outside of RWPS to cover for us. Such a person will need to know some information about you so that he/she can help in your therapist’s absence. Of course, the covering psychologist is bound by the same laws and rules as we are to protect your confidentiality. In such case, we will inform you in advance of such an arrangement.
11. If your RWPS therapist becomes suddenly unable to provide services to you (e.g., illness, injury, death), other employees of RWPS and/or another psychologist may need to take custody of your records in order to contact you, help you obtain appropriate services from another provider, and/or transfer your records.

Except for situations like those we have described above, we will maintain your confidentiality. The clinical director of RWPS (currently Dr. Andrew Sodergren) will ensure that anyone working for RWPS (e.g.,

answering the phone, scheduling, accounting, etc.) will maintain your confidentiality as well. We also ask you not to disclose the identity of any other person being seen in this office.

Clinical Records

We create and maintain clinical records for everyone who receives our services. These records may contain the following: reasons for seeking our services, personal history, diagnoses, treatment goals, test data, test results, reports, dates of service, progress notes, reports of professional consultations, billing records, treatment records received from other providers, correspondence between you and your therapist, etc. As mentioned above, RWPS uses a cloud-based practice management system, which maintains our clinical records electronically. The company that provides this service is HIPAA compliant and reliably maintains the integrity and security of the clinical records. We will work with our software company to ensure that your records will be securely maintained for at least the duration required by law.

You have the right to review your own records and/or obtain a copy of your records. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, it is recommended that you initially review them in the presence of your therapist, or have them forwarded by our office to another mental health professional who can discuss the contents with you. In most circumstances, there will be reasonable costs to reproduce records. You can also request that we correct your records or add information if you believe they are in error. This is explained in more detail in our Notice of Privacy Practices.

Similarly, parents/guardians of children under the age of 18 can request to view or obtain a copy of their child's clinical records. We must also give access to a nonresidential parent who requests access to their child's medical record. However, nonresidential parents' access to his/her child's records may be restricted by the court overseeing divorce and custody proceedings. Thus, before allowing a nonresidential parent access a child's medical record, we will ask to see the latest parenting plan or other court documents outlining access to such records.

Fees, Financial Policies, and Insurance

There is little as precious to us in this life as our health. Even more, mental health is often taken for granted until it is threatened by psychological difficulties. We recognize that psychological services often reflect a considerable financial investment, but we also believe that the goal of psychological wholeness is worth it! We also know the value of the services we provide and the potential long-term benefits in one's personal and interpersonal life. Paying for psychological services is making an investment in becoming more fully the person you were created to be. What else is that important?

At RWPS, the first appointment is a 90-minute clinical interview aimed at building a relationship with you, clarifying the nature of your struggles, and exploring how we might work together to assist you. Subsequent sessions are 50 minutes in length, unless alternate arrangements are made. Our fees for these appointments are as follows (the fees quoted here are subject to change):

Doctoral-level providers:

Initial appointment (90 minutes): \$320

Subsequent sessions (50 minutes): \$160

Pre-doctoral providers (externs or interns):

Initial appointment (90 minutes): \$220

Subsequent sessions (50 minutes): \$110

Group therapy sessions are 90 minutes and the fee is \$100 for all providers.

In some cases, we may recommend conducting sessions of different duration than those quoted here. For example, fees for psychological assessments depend on the nature of the assessment and how much time will be required to complete it. Fees for these sessions will be discussed at that time.

Since we regard time as a precious gift from God and our sessions with you as a joint commitment to our work, we do reserve the right to charge a \$70 fee for No Shows or appointments cancelled with less than 24 hours notice (except in emergency situations), as described above under Scheduling and Cancelling

Appointments.

All patients are required to pay for the services they receive at the time of service, unless we have an agreement in place to bill a third party for the services you are receiving (e.g., when a third party has sent you for an evaluation or treatment, and they agree to pay for the services). RWPS accepts cash, checks (payable to “Ruah Woods”), and credit/debit cards. Once we swipe your credit/debit card, our practice management software will securely store the information on file to speed future transactions. If your card information changes, please notify the front desk. You may also make payments online through the Patient Portal. We do not routinely allow patients to accrue an unpaid balance. If you become unable to pay for services or begin to accrue a balance, discuss it with us as soon as possible. We will periodically send an invoice for unpaid services. Please respond promptly.

Many people ask if they can use their medical insurance to pay for our services. Currently, RWPS does not participate in any insurance plans or insurance panels. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost, we believe we can provide you a higher standard of care by not participating in insurance. When a provider joins an insurance plan, he has to sign a contract with that company. In essence, the insurance company then has oversight of the services provided. No longer does the therapist work for you; he now works for the insurance company who can decide whether treatment is warranted, how much treatment, what kind of treatment, etc. By remaining outside of that system, RWPS can exercise more flexibility and freedom in providing you services. We are not bound by obligations to an insurance company but rather are committed solely to you and your well-being. Furthermore, participating in insurance plans requires significant administrative work in submitting claims, following up on claims, challenging mistakes and errors, negotiating, completing additional treatment plans and paperwork required by insurance companies, etc. These activities require more administrative help, driving our costs up, and take time away from more valuable activities such as planning your care, consulting with other professionals, continuing education, attending professional conferences, writing, speaking, etc.

Secondly, we believe that remaining separate from insurance plans better safeguards your privacy. By participating in insurance plans, we would be required to provide information about you, your reasons for seeking our services, your diagnoses, your treatment goals, your progress, etc. to the insurance company. Remaining outside of that system, allows us to keep your information and concerns more private.

For these reasons, RWPS has chosen not to participate in health insurance plans. Thus, there are four main options for paying for our services: Self-Pay, Self-Claim, Sponsorship, and the RWPS Charitable Grant Program.

- **Self-Pay:** We accept cash, checks, and credit cards at the time of service. Our practice management software also allows you to make payments online through the Patient Portal.
- **Self-Claim:** Even though we do not directly participate in insurance plans, some patients elect to submit their own claims to their health insurance company for our services as an “out-of-network” provider. We can provide limited assistance in this process. We can provide a statement (sometimes called a “Superbill”) that lists all of the information your insurance company would need to process a claim. You can then mail this statement to the claims department of your insurance company for processing. Please note that these statements become available a few days after services were rendered. Regardless of whether your insurance company will reimburse you, our fees are still your responsibility and are due at the time of service.
- **Sponsorship:** Some of our patients have been successful at finding others to help pay for their psychological services. In some cases family members, friends, or business- or church-related organizations pay part or all of their fees. We encourage you to discern whether there may be sources of financial help that could partner with you and us in helping you become your best self.
- **RWPS Charitable Grant:** For those who cannot afford our services even after pursuing all of the above options, we are pleased to offer a Charitable Grant Program. These monetary Grants are given to a portion of qualifying RWPS patients per session to offset the standard fees. We have a limited budget

for these Grants and individuals interested in receiving a Grant must complete an application and provide verification of their current income (e.g., the first page of your most recent federal tax return). The amount of the Grant will vary depending on the needs of the individual and the availability of funds and is subject to approval. The remaining fee is still the responsibility of the patient and is due at the time of service. Please contact us for more information.

The Benefits and Risks of Therapy

There are risks as well as many benefits associated with the services we provide. We believe it is important to think about both the benefits and risks in making an informed decision. For example, it is common for patients in psychotherapy to experience uncomfortable emotions such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other negative feelings. We may ask you to recall unpleasant memories. We will work with you to minimize the risk that these unpleasant memories or feelings affect your functioning outside of session. Nonetheless, we cannot guarantee that you will not at times feel temporarily worse before experiencing improvements. In addition, some people in the community may mistakenly view anyone in therapy as weak or perhaps as seriously disturbed or even dangerous. Also, individuals in therapy may experience difficulties in some relationships. As you begin to make changes in your life, others may notice and disapprove, which could contribute to conflict. Some family members may also resent you telling the “family secrets” to a stranger. Finally, even with our best efforts, there is a risk that therapy may not work out well for you.

While you consider these risks, you should know that the benefits of psychotherapy have been shown by scientists in hundreds of well-designed research studies. The findings show that, in general, psychotherapy helps people. You may wonder how long it may take for you to experience the benefits of therapy. This depends on numerous factors: the nature and intensity of the difficulty, the treatment goals, how invested you are in working toward those goals, the quality of the relationship with the therapist, frequency of sessions, etc. Research shows that many people receive substantial benefit after approximately 10-15 sessions of psychotherapy while another significant portion of people need 50+ sessions. It is important to realize that there is no magical cure for psychological problems. Many personality traits and habits take considerable time and effort to change. Some of the most fulfilling and fruitful therapy we have had the privilege to conduct has lasted a year or more. In some cases, when we are striving for deep, transformative, and lasting change, the therapy may take a couple of years. Not everyone needs this much therapy, and it is not practical for everyone. It all depends on the person and the various factors mentioned above.

It is vitally important for you and your therapist to discuss these issues and collaborate about what seems best in your case. For this reason, we typically begin with a thorough assessment of your current functioning, relationships in the past and present, and your overall personality. This will entail discussing your presenting concerns, your strengths and weakness, and your history. We may also ask you to complete some psychological testing. After the assessment phase, we will share with you our understanding of your difficulties and work with you to develop a treatment plan regarding whether and how often to continue meeting, the focus of our work, strategies to utilize, etc. We may recommend individual, couple, family, and/or group therapy. We may recommend further testing. We may refer you to another, better-suited mental health or medical professional for assistance. We may recommend lifestyle changes. Whatever the case may be, we will try to work collaboratively with you. We want to make decisions regarding your therapy collaboratively and work as a team.

The type of therapy we use will depend somewhat on what we discovered during the assessment. Some types of the therapy emphasize working more with emotion. Others focus on working with thoughts and beliefs. Yet others focus more on concrete behaviors. Whichever route we may pursue, our basic, fundamental approach to therapy is interpersonal. We believe that the human personality is shaped primarily in and through our relationships. The assessment can help us identify the interpersonal patterns that trouble us in our lives. In therapy, we work to understand and resolve the roots of those patterns and why we hold on to them, learn ways to begin to break those habits, and learn healthier ways of relating to others, to God, and to ourselves.

An important aspect of therapy is to explore the way that the patient and therapist are relating to each other in the here-and-now. By learning to observe how a relationship is unfolding in the present moment the patient is

empowered to choose healthier ways of being with people. The relationship with the therapist is the ideal place to practice this ability. In addition, problems we tend to have in other relationships sometimes crop up in the relationship with the therapist as well. This is not a setback but an ideal opportunity to explore the nature of the difficulty and find ways to overcome it. For these reasons, the therapist may routinely ask about your experience relating with him/her in session and openly discuss how the relationship and therapy are going. If a difficulty arises, it is important to discuss it and resolve it before going on to anything else. Research has shown that the most consistent predictor of whether someone will benefit from psychotherapy is the quality of the relationship with the therapist. Thus, we take great care in forming and maintaining a good working relationship with each patient, and we invite you to be open about how you feel it is going.

Another important aspect of therapy is the experience and exploration of emotion. Scientific research has shown that the best therapeutic outcomes are related to experiencing a level of emotional engagement in session that is neither too much nor too little. If the intensity of emotion is too much, the ability to think and verbalize can be hindered. Conversely, too little emotional engagement means that the therapy is lacking vitality. Rather, we strive to facilitate therapeutic conversations in which the patient is moderately emotionally engaged and able to verbalize his/her experience. Bringing together thinking and feeling in this way appears to promote integration of brain systems and ultimately, psychological health. Thus, we encourage you to work with your therapist to try to achieve and maintain as much as possible this optimal level of emotional engagement in therapy.

We may also recommend certain skills or exercises to practice outside of session. These can take a variety of forms from recommended reading, to written exercises, to relaxation or imagery exercises, spiritual strategies, interactive tasks involving other people, or whatever else is judged to be potentially helpful. Working diligently on these “homework” tasks can help move the therapy along more efficiently and aid your personal growth and healing.

It is important to note that although the relationship between therapist and patient can be very intense at times and a powerful vehicle for change, it is in your best interest that your therapist remains only your therapist. The therapist cannot have any other role in your life such as a close friend, business associate, sexual or romantic partner, etc.

Your Rights

In receiving all services at RWPS, each individual has the right to:

- Impartial access to treatment regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, age, or disability.
- Use his or her preferred or legal name.
- Have his or her personal dignity recognized and respected in the provision of treatment, including communication in a manner the individual can understand.
- Be protected from harm (abuse, neglect, and exploitation) and supported in communicating with other agencies that might assist with his or her concerns.
- Receive individualized treatment including the following:
 - The provision of humane services, regardless of the levels of financial support.
 - The provision of services within the least restrictive environment.
 - The provision and periodic review of an individualized plan of treatment focused on their particular circumstances.
- For further discussion of your rights regarding your Protected Health Information (PHI), please see our Notice of Privacy Policies.

Questions?

If you have any questions about anything contained in this document or about RWPS services or policies, please do not hesitate to ask your therapist. We are here to serve you and are happy to be of assistance.