



Anxiety Treatment Center of Austin

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512-879-1836 www.anxietyaustin.com

Office Policies

Welcome to the Anxiety Treatment Center of Austin, PLLC. We are pleased to have the opportunity to serve you and hope that this handout will provide information helpful in making an informed decision concerning our services. If you have any questions or concerns about these policies or any other aspect of our practice, please feel free to discuss them with your clinician at any time.

Payment for Service

Patients are expected to pay for services at the time they are provided unless other arrangements have been made. Payment may be made by check, cash, or major credit card. Patients are responsible for payment of all fees even if planning to bill an insurance company for reimbursement.

Cancellations

A minimum of 24 hours notice is required for rescheduling or cancelling an appointment. The full session fee will be charged for missed appointments without such notification. Please note that insurance companies will not provide payment for missed sessions.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, you may reach the Anxiety Treatment Center of Austin, PLLC at 512-879-1836. If you are unable to reach your clinician, please make use of the emergency services listed below:

- General Emergency Number: 911
- 24-hour Crisis Hotline: 512-472-4357
- Seton Shoal Creek Psychiatric Hospital: 512-324-2000

Unpaid Accounts

If you experience difficulty in meeting your payment obligations, please contact your clinician to establish a reasonable payment plan. Overdue accounts (i.e. accounts which remain unpaid for 90 days or for which an agreed-upon payment plan has not been followed) may be turned over to a collection agency as a final resort for non-payment. Overdue accounts may also be subject to interest charges and collection fees.

Independent Practice

Clinicians at the Anxiety Treatment Center of Austin, PLLC may seek consultation or supervision from each other, which may involve the discussion of patient information. Clinicians have no professional affiliation with any of the other therapists who practice in the building who are not employees of Anxiety Treatment Center of Austin, PLLC.

Confidentiality

The privacy and confidentiality of therapy sessions are extremely important to the Anxiety Treatment Center of Austin, PLLC. To the degree allowed by law, information about your contact with your clinician and any others in the office will not be disclosed to any person or organization without your specific, written release to do so. Although you are free to discuss anything that occurs in your sessions with anyone, your clinician is required not to discuss such matters without your written authorization. In all aspects of our practice, communication between clinicians and our patients (or between clinicians and those whom our patients have authorized us to contact) are protected by confidentiality regulations as stipulated by federal and state laws, and by professional standards and ethics.

There are, however, some situations written into law that deny us complete control over confidentiality of communication. They are as follows:

1. A clinician is legally required to report any situation of suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. A clinician is also legally required to report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an elderly or disabled person.
2. In some circumstances, a clinician's records may be subject to a subpoena issued by the court. In particular, confidentiality may be waived with regard to any suit affecting the parent-child relationship.
3. If a clinician believes a patient may harm her/himself or another individual, the clinician is permitted and obligated by law to break confidentiality by contacting law enforcement officials and/or medical authorities who may then take protective actions.
4. If a clinician is contacted by an insurance company or an auditor, the clinician may be required to release patient information as dictated by law. The law also permits a clinician to release information to a collection agency in order to collect on an overdue account.
5. If a patient discloses to a clinician the identity of a mental health professional who engaged in sexual contact with him or her during the process of treatment, state law requires the clinician to report that professional to the appropriate district attorney. In this situation, a clinician is not permitted to disclose the identity of the patient if he or she does not wish to be identified.
6. Confidentiality does not extend to criminal proceedings in Texas.

This list is not exhaustive, but these are the most common circumstances that may occur. The situations outlined above are out of the ordinary and have no impact on the large majority of people seeking professional mental health services. We share this information with you so that you can be fully informed and your questions and concerns can be addressed.

Psychological Services

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the clinician and the patient, and the particular problems you bring forward. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on the things you and your clinician talk about both during your sessions and at home.

There are many different methods your clinician will use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Some of the techniques include dialogue, interpretation, cognitive reframing, exploration of thoughts and feelings, awareness exercises, self-monitoring, journal-keeping, and reading. Your clinician may recommend that you consult with another healthcare provider, or suggest other approaches as an adjunct to your therapy (e.g., group therapy, psychiatric consultation). You have the right to refuse anything that your clinician suggests without being penalized in any way.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. Making changes in your beliefs or behaviors can be difficult, and can sometimes be disruptive to the relationships you already have. You may find your relationship with your clinician to be a source of strong feelings. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. Most people who take these risks find that therapy is helpful, and your clinician will do what he or she can to help you minimize risks and maximize positive outcomes. But, there are no guarantees of what you will experience or the outcome.

Your first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, your clinician will be able to offer you some first impressions of what your therapy will include and a treatment plan to follow, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with your clinician. 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 your clinician's work with you, you should discuss them with your clinician whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, your clinician will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

The duration of therapy is something that is very difficult to predict in advance. Some patients may get the help they need in only a few sessions, while others may choose to continue therapy for several months or years. Please feel free to discuss this with your clinician if you have any questions or concerns.

You have the right to ask questions about anything that happens in therapy. Your clinician is always willing to discuss the rationale for his or her approaches, and to consider alternatives that might work better. You may feel free to ask your clinician to try something that you think will be helpful. You can ask your clinician about his or her training for working with your concerns, and

you can request that your clinician refer you to someone else if you decide that he or she is not the right therapist for you. You are free to leave therapy at any time.

Records

The laws and standards of behavioral healthcare require that your clinician keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of the records unless your clinician believes that seeing them would be emotionally damaging, in which case he or she will be happy to send them to a mental health professional of your choice. Patients will be charged an appropriate fee for any time spent in preparing information requests.

HIPAA

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a federal law that provides new privacy protections and new patient rights with regard to the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) used for the purpose of treatment, payment, and health care operations. HIPAA requires that your clinician provide you with a “Notice of Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information” (the Notice) for use and disclosure of PHI for treatment, payment and health care operations. The Notice, which accompanies these Office Policies, explains HIPAA and its application to your personal health information in greater detail. The law requires that your clinician obtain your signature acknowledging that he or she has provided you with this information. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you read them carefully. Your clinician is always willing to discuss any questions you have about the procedures at any time.

HIPAA provides you with several new or expanded rights with regard to your Clinical Record and disclosures of PHI. These rights include requesting that your clinician amend your record; requesting restrictions on what information from your Clinical Record is disclosed to others; requesting an accounting of most disclosures of PHI that you have neither consented to nor authorized; determining the location to which protected information disclosures are sent; having any complaints you make about our policies and procedures recorded in your records; and the right to a paper copy of these Office Policies, the accompanying Notice of Privacy Practices, and our privacy policies and procedures.

Patient Information and Rights

You are ENTITLED to receive information regarding methods of therapy, the techniques used, duration (if known) and fee structure. You have the right to seek a second opinion or terminate therapy at any time.

The information provided by the patient during counseling is legally confidential except for certain legal exceptions. Exceptions to the rule of confidentiality will be identified to you should any such situation arise during therapy, if practical. Examples of such exceptions are when the patient is an imminent danger to self or others, or when there is suspected child abuse or neglect.