



Heather Bergida Thurston, PhD, PLLC
Licensed Psychologist

Consent for Treatment

Welcome to Heather Bergida Thurston, PhD, PLLC. This form is called a Consent for Services (the "Consent") and contains important information about the practice and its business policies. Dr. Thurston asks that you read and sign this Consent before you start therapy. Please review the information and contact Dr. Thurston if you have any questions.

THE THERAPY PROCESS

Therapy is a collaborative process where you and Dr. Thurston will work together on equal footing to achieve goals established and set by you. Therapy begins with a 60-minute intake session. The intake process allows Dr. Thurston to fully understand your experiences, symptoms, and therapy goals. If Dr. Thurston does not feel that her services are the best match for you, she will provide you with treatment referrals in the area that may better fit your need. After intake, you will attend regular therapy sessions at Dr. Thurston's office or through video, often referred to as telehealth. Participation in therapy is voluntary - you can stop at any time. Throughout the therapeutic relationship, you and Dr. Thurston will regularly review your therapy goals, treatment plan (including type, length, and frequency of sessions), and progress towards achieving them. Upon completion of your therapy goals, you and Dr. Thurston will identify supports that will help you maintain your progress and discuss how to return to therapy if you need it in the future. Any questions about your treatment should be discussed with Dr. Thurston as they arise.

CLIENT RIGHTS & CONFIDENTIALITY

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a federal law that provides privacy protections and patients' rights regarding use and disclosure of Protected Health Information (PHI) for the purposes of treatment, payment and/or health care operations. In general, the law protects the privacy of communication between a patient and a psychologist. Your signature on this document confirms that you have read the Notice of Privacy Policies and provide consent to the terms detailed within.

FEES & PAYMENT FOR SERVICES

Dr. Thurston is considered an out-of-network provider with insurance companies and opted-out of the Medicare Program. Any Medicare recipients must inform Dr. Thurston of their status and sign the accompanying affidavit describing the opt-out parameters. You will be responsible for the full session fee at the time of each appointment. Dr. Thurston will provide an invoice upon request if you choose to submit a claim to your insurance company; however, you are still responsible for the full amount if your insurance company provides no reimbursement to you. The fees for Dr. Thurston's services are as follows:

60 minute Intake or Individual Session	\$245
45 minute Individual Session	\$185
50 minute Couple/Family Session	\$215

For non-standard session durations and/or other professional services you may need (i.e., report writing, telephone/email/text conversations, preparation of records or treatment summaries, consultation with other professionals and any other request), the fee is broken down by the hourly session rate. You are required to maintain a valid credit or debit card on file for payment. Any unpaid balances may accrue a finance charge of 2% per month for balances after 30 days and be sent to collections after 60 days.

Cancellation policy: Cancellation less than 24 hours from the start of your appointment time, on the same day as your appointment, or failure to attend your appointment will result in the full session fee. These fees may not be reimbursed by insurance companies. If you arrive late and/or end a session

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early, you will be charged the full session rate. If consecutive and/or multiple cancellations of a repeat appointment occurs, Dr. Thurston will no longer reserve your standing appointment time and you will transition to scheduling at the end of each session or via the online portal.

Legal Fees: Dr. Thurston may not be hired as an expert witness if she has served as your health care provider. She will not appear in court unless a valid witness subpoena has been issued. Fees for legal involvement are \$450/hour billed in 15 minute increments for matters pertaining to the case. If an appearance in court requires the cancellation of clients, Dr. Thurston will charge the missed time. It is expected that the hiring party will be responsible for fees. If a subpoena is issued by an opposing party, the hiring party will be expected to pay.

COMMUNICATION

Contact information: Dr. Thurston may be reached by telephone/text at (919) 415-1795 or via email at heather@heatherbthurstonphd.com. Email is the preferred method of communication for administrative tasks. If you need to contact Dr. Thurston regarding clinical needs, please send an email stating that you would like to schedule a time to speak by phone. Although Dr. Thurston's email/phone meet the standards for HIPAA compliance, you assume all risk for PHI shared via these means knowing that your personal accounts and devices may not meet the same standard. Dr. Thurston's contact information is not intended for crisis intervention or emergencies. Please call 911 or go to the emergency room for urgent needs.

Scheduling: Appointments may be scheduled, canceled, and/or rescheduled using the SimplyBook.me system, which is preferred. You may also contact Dr. Thurston by email/text to manage your appointments.

End of Therapy: You may elect to end treatment at any time. Any client who has not been seen in a 6 week time period will no longer be considered an active patient for legal and ethical purposes unless previously arranged.

Social Media: Heather Bergida Thurston, PhD, PLLC does not maintain a presence on social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc... Dr. Thurston does not accept friend/contact requests or follow clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc) where she has a personal presence. Dr Thurston does not read or respond to messages/wall posts/comments/etc.. sent on social networking sites as a means of contact. If you should find a listing for Heather Bergida Thurston, PhD, PLLC on the internet, please know that the listing is not a request for a testimonial, rating, review, or endorsement of you as my client. Due to confidentiality, Dr. Thurston cannot respond to any review whether it is positive or negative.

RECORD KEEPING & BOOKING SYSTEMS

Therapy Notes: Dr. Thurston is required to keep records about your treatment. Records for couple therapy are maintained in one person's name, which will be determined by the couple prior to the intake session. Your records are maintained in an electronic health record provided by TherapyNotes.

SimplyBook: Dr. Thurston uses an online booking system to maintain her schedule. Although your medical record is maintained in Therapy Notes, you may elect to upload your history form to SimplyBook as part of the intake process. You will also receive reminders of upcoming appointments through this system.

****Therapy Notes and SimplyBook.me meet the standard requirements for HIPAA compliance****

TELEHEALTH SERVICES

To use telehealth, you need an internet connection and a device with a camera for video. Dr. Thurston can explain how to log in and use any features on the telehealth platform. If telehealth is not a good fit for you, Dr. Thurston will recommend a different option. You may be asked to share personal information with the telehealth platform to create an account, such as your name, date of birth, location, and contact information. Dr. Thurston carefully vets any telehealth platform to ensure your

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information is secured to the appropriate standards. At times, you could have problems with your internet, video, or sound. If you have issues during a session, Dr. Thurston will follow the backup plan that you agree to prior to sessions. It may be difficult for Dr. Thurston to provide immediate support during an emergency or crisis. You and Dr. Thurston will develop a plan for emergencies or crises, such as choosing a local emergency contact, creating a communication plan, and making a list of local support, emergency, and crisis services. It is recommended that you secure a location for telehealth sessions that guarantee other people cannot hear your conversation or see your screen during sessions. You may not use video or audio to record your session unless you ask Dr. Thurston for her permission in advance.

ANIMAL ASSISTED INTERVENTION (PET THERAPY)

- Animal-assisted interventions, sometimes referred to as therapy animal visits, are an opportunity for clients at the main office of Heather Bergida Thurston, PhD, PLLC. Belle and I are registered as a therapy animal team by Pet Partners, a nationally recognized organization with the highest standards in the industry.
- Considerable steps have been taken to minimize potential risks associated with AAI. However, there are certain unavoidable risks present when working with animals. Under most circumstances, these risks include, but are not limited to: allergies to pet hair/dander, infections, minor scratches/bruises, or damage to clothing. Under unusual circumstances, risks may include but are not limited to: intimidation and injurious bites. It is important to note that all animals, regardless of temperament and training, can behave unpredictably or aggressively when stressed or threatened.
- To minimize the potential risk of the animal acting out due to stress or fear, it is important that clients follow the Dr. Thurston's instructions regarding interaction with the therapy animal. Examples of appropriate interaction with the animal include: petting, hugging, brushing, obedience work, or feeding treats. Treats and brushes will be provided for use only by the handler. Clients under no circumstances are permitted to restrain, provoke, intimidate, strike, or otherwise cause pain to the therapy animal. For the safety of the client and well-being of the animal, these actions will result in the immediate and non-negotiable removal of the animal from the interaction.
- The therapy animal handler retains the right to remove their therapy animal from an interaction for any reason. Under no circumstances will the therapy animal participate in interactions without the presence of the handler. The client will always retain the right to request that the animal be moved to a separate area of the office and decline an interaction. Your signature with this document provides acknowledgment of the potential risks and benefits associated with AAI and consent to interacting with registered therapy animals at Heather Bergida Thurston, PhD, PLLC.

I look forward to our work together and helping you achieve your therapy goals.
Warmly, Heather Thurston

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