

## **Agreement Regarding Minors**

The involvement of children and adolescents in therapy can be highly beneficial to their overall development. Very often, it is best to see them *with* parents and other family members; however, sometimes they are best seen *alone*. Your therapist will assess which might be best for your child and make recommendations to you. Obviously, the support of all the child's caregivers is essential, as well as their understanding of the basic procedures involved in counseling children.

The general goal of involving children in therapy is to foster their development at all levels. At times, it may seem that a specific behavior is needed, such as to get the child to obey or reveal certain information. Although those objectives may be part of overall development, they may not be the best goals for therapy. Again, your therapist will evaluate and discuss these goals with you.

Because your therapist's role is that of the child's helper, he or she will not become involved in legal disputes or other official proceedings unless compelled to do so by a court of law. Matters involving custody and mediation are best handled by another professional who is specially trained in those areas rather than by the child's therapist.

The issue of confidentiality is critical in treating children. When children are seen with adults, what is discussed is known to those present and should be kept confidential except by mutual agreement. Children seen in individual sessions (except under certain conditions) are not legally entitled to confidentiality (also called privilege in court); their parents have this right. However, unless children feel they have some privacy in speaking with a therapist, the benefits of therapy may be lost. Therefore, it is necessary to work out an arrangement in which children feel that their privacy is generally being respected, at the same time that parents have access to critical information. This agreement must have the understanding and approval of the parents or other responsible adults and of the child in therapy.

This agreement regarding treatment of minors has provisions for inserting individual details, which can be supplied by both the child and the adults involved. However, it is first important to point out the exceptions to this general agreement. The following circumstances override the general policy that children are entitled to privacy while parents or guardians have a legal right to information.

- Confidentiality and privilege are limited in cases involving child abuse, neglect, molestation, or danger to self or others. In these cases, the therapist is required to make an official report to the appropriate agency and will attempt to involve parents as much as possible.
- Minors may independently enter into therapy and claim the privilege of confidentiality in cases involving abuse or severe neglect, molestation, pregnancy, or communicable diseases, and when they are on active military duty, married, or officially emancipated. They may seek therapy independently for substance abuse, danger to self or others, or a mental disorder, but parents must be involved unless doing so would harm the child.

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A Christian Marriage and Family Counseling Practice

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- Any evaluation, treatment, or reports ordered by, or done for submission to a third party such as a court or a school is not entirely confidential and will be shared with that agency with your specific written permission. Please also note that your therapist does not have control over information once it is released to a third party.

Now that the various aspects surrounding confidentiality have been stated, the specific agreement between you and your child/children follows:

I, (name) \_\_\_\_\_ (relationship to child) \_\_\_\_\_  
 I, (name) \_\_\_\_\_ (relationship to child) \_\_\_\_\_

agree that my/our child/children

(Name) _____	age _____	DOB _____
(Name) _____	age _____	DOB _____
(Name) _____	age _____	DOB _____
(Name) _____	age _____	DOB _____

should have privacy in his/her/their therapy sessions, and I agree to allow this privacy except in extreme situations, which I will discuss with the therapist. At the same time, except under unusual circumstances, I understand that I have a legal right to obtain this information.

**Legality of Consent for Treatment of a Minor**

Minor Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_  
 (First name) (Middle) (Last name)

Minor Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_  
 (First name) (Middle) (Last name)

Minor Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_  
 (First name) (Middle) (Last name)

Minor Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_  
 (First name) (Middle) (Last name)

I certify that I am the (check one) \_\_\_ Father, \_\_\_ Mother; \_\_\_\_\_ Legal Guardian of the above minor(s) and that I do have legal custody of the above child/adolescent. I, hereby, give my authorization and consent for the above named minor(s) to receive outpatient assessment/ and or therapy from a Marriage and Family Therapist with Schwarz and Associates.

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Therapy Effectiveness**

To increase the effectiveness of the therapy, I agree to the following:

The goals of the therapy are as follows:

(by parent) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(by child) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I will do my best to ensure that therapy sessions are attended and will not inquire about the content of sessions. If my child prefers/children prefer not to volunteer information about the sessions, I will respect his/her/their right not to disclose details. Basically, unless my child has/children have been abused or is/are a clear danger to self or others, the therapist will normally tell me only the following:

- whether sessions are attended
- whether or not my child is/children are generally participating
- whether or not progress is generally being made

The normal procedure for discussing issues that are in my child's/children's therapy will be joint sessions including my child/children, the therapist, and me and perhaps other appropriate adults. If I believe there are significant health or safety issues that I need to know about, I will contact the therapist and attempt to arrange a session with my child/children present. Similarly, when the therapist determines that there are significant issues that should be discussed with parents, every effort will be made to schedule a session involving the parents and the child/children. I understand that if information becomes known to the therapist and has a significant bearing on the child's/children's well being, the therapist will work with the person providing the information to ensure that both parents are aware of it. In other words, the therapist will not divulge secrets except as mandated by law, but may encourage the individual who has the information to disclose it for therapy to continue effectively.

Parent(s): Please make any additions or modifications as desired: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

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

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

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Minor(s): Please make any additions or modifications as desired: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

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

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

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

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, title \_\_\_\_\_, have discussed the issues above with the minor client and their parent or Legal Guardian. My observations of each of the parties involved, taking in each person's behavior and responses give me no reason to believe that these persons are not fully competent to give informed and willing consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Therapist with Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date