



Informed Consent for Therapy Services

SERVICE AGREEMENT

Welcome to Sunny Creek Ranch. This document contains important information about our professional services and business policies. Although these documents are long and sometimes detailed, it is very important that you understand them. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. We can discuss any questions you have when you sign them or at any time in the future. Therapy is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in psychotherapy, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. There are also legal limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. Sunny Creek Ranch has corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

I. SERVICES

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable feelings, (sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness), because the process of psychotherapy often requires discussing the unpleasant aspects of life. However, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for individuals who undertake it. Therapy often leads to a significant reduction in feelings of distress, increased satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, greater personal awareness and insight, increased skills for managing stress and resolutions to specific problems. Psychotherapy requires an active effort on your part.

Sunny Creek Ranch offers a treatment modality called **equine-assisted psychotherapy** which is an experiential form of psychotherapy where horses are involved in the sessions. “Experiential” means that you will be involved in hands-on experiences with the horses designed to reflect things going on in your life. The process is not always about interacting with the treatment team, although that will happen at times. It is about providing you the opportunity to experience, explore, problem-solve, discover, be creative, gain insight and experience practical applications of what you are learning in the moment. The process is about “doing” along with the “talking.”

Group sessions in particular may “trigger” some clients, and not everything that is said by other members of a group will be agreeable to you as an individual. In those circumstances, we ask that you side bar with one of our professionals or enroll in individual therapy sessions.

Why horses? There are several reasons we choose to use horses in this work, but primarily it is due to their nature as a social and prey animal. As a result of this nature, they have an extraordinary ability to read our nonverbal communication – picking up on messages we are sending which we are not always conscious of what we are doing. With this, they start responding to us in familiar ways reminding us of other people and things in our life. It is through this they become metaphors (symbols) providing us with the opportunity to work on ourselves in relation to those aspects of our lives. The horses tend to play out our life stories, and then may either show us or provide opportunities to change what those stories look like. Horses do not know our past, education, gender, race, or other labels we may apply to ourselves and each other. They are in the moment and can be a part of this relationship without the biases we humans put on each other. This provides even more value in the insight they can provide us about ourselves.

There are some risks in being around horses due to their size and nature of being an animal. This is covered in the Liability Release Form we have provided for your review and signature and which we have covered verbally with you. It is important you understand the risks and benefits and ask any questions you may have about that in making your decision to be involved in these services.

Sunny Creek Ranch follows the EAGALA Model of equine-assisted psychotherapy. This means:

1. Therapy sessions are conducted by a facilitating team (treatment team) of a Licensed Mental Health Professional (MH) and a qualified Equine Specialist (ES) in all of your sessions. This professional team is EAGALA Certified which means completion of specialized training in this model, requirements of ongoing continuing education and adherence to high standards of professionalism and practice. Both members of the team are involved in your therapy process. Please see our website to read more about our biographies.
2. All sessions are on the ground – there is no riding of horses involved in the treatment process. This is psychotherapy and even though you may learn a thing or two about horses, it is not the intent or focus to learn about horses or how to ride them. We are here to address your therapy goals and we commit to utilizing the methods we have found to best support that focus.
3. The process is solution-oriented – meaning we believe you have the best solutions for yourself when provided the opportunity to discover them. We are here to provide the space and guidance through exploring what is happening in the process. You are an individual, and every life situation you are involved in will have its own unique solutions which fit best for you – we are here, along with the horses, to help you find them.

II. APPOINTMENTS

Appointments will ordinarily be 50 minutes in duration, once per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be more or less frequent as needed. Small groups last approximately 1 hour 45 minutes (winter groups Dec-Feb are 1hr due to temperatures). If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, we ask that you provide us with 24 hours notice. If you miss a session without cancelling, or cancel with less than 24 hours' notice, our team will decide if further sessions will be booked. If it is warranted and possible, we will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment. In addition, you are responsible for coming to your session on time; if you are late, your appointment will still end on time.

III. CONFIDENTIALITY

All sessions and their content, as well as your records, will be kept strictly confidential. To the extent possible, you will be informed before confidential information is disclosed, and in that event only the essential information required by law or to collect payment will be revealed.

There are legal limits to this confidentiality creating circumstances in which we may disclose mental health records without consent or authorization which include: 1) If we feel you are a danger to yourself or others, 2) If we suspect a child or elderly or incapacitated person is abused or neglected, 3) Disclosure is required by the court.

IV. CONTACTING US

We are often not immediately available by phone. We do not answer our phone when in session with clients or otherwise unavailable or on personal time. At these times, you may leave a message on our voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible. If, for any number of unforeseen reasons, you do not hear from us or we are unable to reach you, and you feel you cannot wait for a return call or if you feel unable to keep yourself

safe, please go to your local hospital emergency room or call 911 and ask to speak to the mental health worker on call.

V. PROFESSIONAL FEES

“Horses For Heroes” sessions are provided at no cost due to the support of our local community partnerships, grants, and private funding. For all other sessions, fees apply. You are responsible for paying at the time of your session (start of session) unless prior arrangements have been made. [Payment may be made by check or cash; we are not able to process credit card charges as payment.] Any checks returned to our office are subject to an additional fee of up to \$25.00 to cover the bank fee that we incur. If you refuse to pay your debt, we reserve the right to use an attorney or collection agency to secure payment. We have the right to terminate care for non-payment with appropriate planning for your treatment needs. If you anticipate becoming involved in a court case, we recommend that you discuss this with us fully before you waive your right to confidentiality. If your case requires our participation, you will be expected to pay for the professional time required even if another party compels us to testify.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand this Agreement and agree to their terms.

Signature of Patient or Personal Representative

Printed Name of Patient or Personal Representative

Date _____

Description of Personal Representative’s Authority: _____

Confidentiality Agreement

I, _____, understand that Sunny Creek Ranch Equine Services provides Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) on their premises. Any form of intervention and therapy underlies strict rules of confidentiality.

By signing, I agree to never share anything that I might see or hear about the clients or treatment team in any written, verbal, or photographic form.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

What Else You Need to Know

- SAFETY is #1. Please read and follow our **BARN RULES** posted at the hay barn.
- We CARE about you and your family. Our services are provided at no cost if you are enrolled in our Horses for Heroes scholarship.
- Proof of military service via DD214 or other valid military ID is required to participate in Horses for Heroes.
- Liability forms and Intake paperwork must be signed and completed prior to participation.
- Our sessions are hosted at a private ranch, please respect their privacy & the privacy of other client appointments by entering the property only at your scheduled appointment time.
- Since we work outdoors, we don't have a secluded "waiting room." There might be people coming and going in between sessions. If this is a concern, please address it with us so we can make special accommodations.
- A portable toilet is located outside of the front gate for restroom use.
- Park outside of the front gate unless you have physical limitations.
- No food is allowed within the pasture.
- All phones should be put on silence during sessions, we understand that emergencies do arise, please step away and answer any urgent calls.
- Do not take photos unless expressed consent is given by every individual in a group session.
- **Confidentiality is taken very seriously. Any discussion of private, confidential information outside of our sessions is grounds for immediate dismissal from our program.**
- The mental health professionals are granted full authority by Sunny Creek Ranch to immediately deny continuation of sessions if a client is deemed intoxicated or impaired.
- The mental health professionals maintain authority to determine if a client is responding to treatment and if he/she should continue our program.
- If you are ever in need of immediate help, the VA Veterans Crisis Line is **1-800-273-8255**, Press 1 to speak to someone, text **838255**, or chat at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net.