

Lori Heroman LPC

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Baton Rouge, LA 70809

## **Reunification of Child with Family Members**

### **Policy and Procedures**

The following statements reflect the policy and procedures of the office of Lori Heroman LPC. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lori Heroman directly.

#### **Purpose of Reunification**

Reunification therapy refers to family therapy that aims to reunite or reestablish a relationship, usually between a parent and child. It emphasizes attachment, promotes healthy communication, and works to heal injuries in the relationship. It can aim to improve relationships within the family or treat alienation.

The primary goal of this type of therapy is to reestablish trust between the parent and child, so allowing the therapy to progress at the child's pace is essential. Reunification work can be long-term, or short-term, depending on the child's feelings.

It is common for children to be more attached to one parent than another, however; it is important for children to be given an opportunity to get to know the other half of themselves. Research indicates repeatedly how important it is for children's overall psychological wellbeing to have an opportunity to repair estranged relationships with their estranged family members. Experts have studied the long-term effects of this estrangement upon children as adults. The data indicates that these adult children will experience higher rates of depression, divorce, and substance abuse. They suffer from low self-esteem and problems with identity. These children lack a sense of belonging or roots. To avoid this trauma as adults, a child may benefit from participating in reunification in a healthy manner.

It is important for all parties involved in reconciling the child with the estranged parent. This process can be difficult and emotional for all involved. However, it is necessary to promote the growth of a healthy relationship.

## **Process of Reunification**

Since reunification is court ordered, all parties are to cooperate with the process set up by the mental health professional. I have been appointed to act in this role. Periodically, I will be reporting to the court and your attorneys about your cooperation and participation in this process and the progress of the meetings. I hope that all the adults can work together to assist your child in the process of reunification.

- 1.) To begin the process, I will meet with each parent at separate meetings. Each parent will be financially responsible for their own session. The cost of each session is 125.00 per hour. The purpose of this first meeting is to get the different perspectives of the adults involved in the reunification process.
- 2.) After I have met with each adult involved, I will meet 1-2 times with the child individually. This time is for the child to become familiar with me and to build our rapport. Typically, the person who is requesting reunification is responsible for the cost of these sessions, however, I will follow any judgements issued by the court for financial responsibility.
- 3.) Once I feel rapport has been established, I will begin joint sessions with the parent and child. I will then determine the frequency of the joint meetings.
- 4.) I often feel that a meeting outside my office may benefit the reunification process. I will inform both families if this is the case so that a date and time can be mutually agreed upon.
- 5.) It is essential that all parties involved in this process exhibit a willingness to cooperate with the reunification process even if you do not agree.
- 6.) It is also important that all parties show respect to the other parent to protect the child from feeling that he/she must choose a side. It is important for each child to not be "in the middle" and to be allowed to love and cultivate a healthy relationship with both parents.
- 7.) Please refrain from making negative comments about the other parent or the decision of the court.

## **Organization of the meeting process**

1. The length of the sessions is one hour. If you are late, the meeting will conclude at the usual time.
- 2.) Information shared in the counseling session is confidential and is rarely disclosed without the written permission of the adult client or the parent/legal guardian of the minor child. However, confidentiality during the reunification process may be limited since it is ordered by the court. Please talk to your lawyer with any questions or concerns.
- 3.) All fees are to be paid by the individual designated by the court to be responsible. A credit card must be kept on file in my office.

4.) If you need to cancel an appointment, please work to give 48-hour notice. If the appointment is cancelled for sickness or emergency reasons a fee will not be charged, however; notice must be given for cancellation.

5.) There is a charge for all telephone calls over 10 minutes. The fee is 25.00 for each 10-minute call after the initial ten minutes. Please be aware you may have to pay for this charge even if you do not have to pay for regularly scheduled sessions. (I.E., if the person calling is not the designated payee, they will be responsible for the call and the fee therein)

6.) Fees for correspondence. Periodically, I will be sending reports to the court. Any type of correspondence will be billed directly to the person who has requested the correspondence. The charge will depend on the amount of time needed to meet the request. The fee will start at a minimum of 30-minute fee of 62.50.

7.) Fees for court testimony. Court testimony is seen as a separate service; therefore, a fee will be charged for any court testimony whether in person or virtually. The fee for the court is 250.00 per hour with a minimum of two hours booked out. Payment must be made one week in advance of the court date.

8.) After my office has closed, you may leave a message on my voice mail or send me an email to: [lori@heromancounseling.com](mailto:lori@heromancounseling.com). I cannot guarantee I will check my voice or email during off hours, holidays, or weekends. If you cannot get ahold of me and it is an emergency, please call 911 or the COPE team at OLOL Regional Medical Center.

I have read and understand the Policy and Procedures as stated by Lori Heroman LPC for Reunification Therapy. I have had the opportunity to talk with Ms. Heroman and address her any questions or concerns.

Name of Children

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Name of parent involved in Reunification process:

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Name of additional parent/guardian

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Date:

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Name of Counselor involved in Reunification process.

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