COLLATERAL PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

WHO IS A COLLATERAL?

A Collateral is usually a spouse, family member, or friend, who assists in the mental health treatment of the identified client. The Collateral is not considered to be a client and is not the subject of the treatment. Psychologists and psychiatrists have certain legal and ethical responsibilities to clients, and the privacy of the relationship is given legal protection. My primary responsibility is to my client, and I must place their interests first. You also have less privacy protection.

THE ROLE OF COLLATERALS IN MENTAL HEATH TREATMENT

The role of the collateral will vary greatly, but in no instance will you be the subject of the treatment. A Collateral might attend only a single session, either alone or with the client, to provide information to the mental health professional. A Collateral might attend many or all of the client's treatment sessions and his/her relationship with the client may be a focus of the treatment. In some situations, the Collateral might arrive in advance of any contact with a client to learn about treatment options and provide information about the prospective client's history and needs. We will discuss your specific role in the treatment at our first meeting and other times as necessary.

BENEFITS AND RISKS

Although you are not being treated, counseling and mental health treatment can produce intense emotional experiences, and your participation may engender strong anxiety or emotional distress. It may also expose or create tension in your relationship with the client. While your participation can result in a better understanding of the client or an improved relationship, or may even help in your own personal development, there is no guarantee that this will be the case. Mental health treatment is a positive experience for many, but it is not helpful to all people.

MEDICAL RECORDS

No record or chart will be maintained on you in your role as Collateral. Notes about you may be entered into the identified client's chart. The client has a right to access the chart and the material contained therein. You have no right to access that chart without the written consent of the identified client. You will not carry a diagnosis, and there is no individualized treatment plan for you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The confidentiality of information in the client's chart, including the information that you provide, is protected by both federal and state law. It can only be released if the identified client specifically authorizes its release. There are some exceptions to this general rule:

- If I suspect you are abusing or neglecting a child or a vulnerable adult, I am required to file a report with the appropriate agency.

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- If I believe that you are a danger to yourself (either through suicide or other self-destructive behavior) I will take actions to protect your life even if I must reveal your identity to do so.
- If you threaten serious bodily harm to another, I will take necessary actions to protect that person even if I must reveal your identity to do so.

You are expected to maintain the confidentiality of the identified client (your spouse, friend, or child) in your role as a Collateral participant.

DO COLLATERALS EVER BECOME A CLIENT OR PATIENT?
Although Collaterals are not clients of the mental health professional and are not the subject of treatment, you may discuss your own problems that interact with issues of the identified client in the sessions. The mental health professional may recommend formal treatment for a Collateral. If such a recommendation is made, in most cases, you would be referred to another provider which is considered the best practice. When a Collateral begins treatment, then a diagnosis, treatment plan and chart records will be prepared.

PAYMENT
Payment is due and payable at the time of service.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION
In order for a Collateral to participate in treatment sessions, the identified client must agree to sign a Release of Information (ROI) to the Collateral Participant documenting their permission for the Collateral to have access to their mental health information as it is disclosed in the treatment sessions and in communication, as necessary, with the Mental Health Provider outside of the sessions. In general, the ROI will give permission for oral communication only, although additional permissions for written documents can also be given if the client prefers.

In the absence of an ROI, the mental health provider can receive information about the client from the Collateral but no information about the client will be disclosed.

SUMMARY
If you have questions about mental health treatment or procedures, or your role in this process, please discuss them with the mental health provider. Remember that the best way to assure quality and ethical treatment is to keep communication open and direct with the client's mental health provider. By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understood this document.

Signature _____

Date _____

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