



<https://otterwellmentalhealth.com>

Phone: 503-836-3152 • Fax: 503-836-3155 • [info@otterwellmentalhealth.com](mailto:info@otterwellmentalhealth.com)

1336 NW Flanders Street #143 Portland, Oregon 97209

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

Welcome to OtterWell Mental Health LLC! This document contains important information about our professional services and business policies. Although documents like this are often long and sometimes complex, you must read them carefully, note any questions you might have so you can discuss them with your provider, and be sure you understand what you are agreeing to. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you, your provider, and OtterWell Mental Health LLC.

### **Provider Information**

Stephanie Schaefer, Psy.D. (she/her) is a licensed psychologist in the state of Oregon (license #2396). She completed her doctoral degree in clinical psychology at Pacific University in 2011 and her master's in counseling psychology also at Pacific University in 2006. Stephanie primarily uses Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) frameworks, informed by individual client needs, positive psychology and humanistic therapy techniques, and clinical judgment, to collaboratively create a treatment plan to help her clients achieve their goals in therapy. Stephanie works with adults experiencing stress, anxiety, life transitions, depression, and those who want to optimize their wellbeing. She has experience working with healthcare professionals at all levels, including call center staff, nurses, physicians, and executives. Additionally, she has worked with college students throughout her career and particularly enjoys helping those in transition to discover their path in life.

Phone: 503-836-3152

Email: [DrStephanie@otterwellmentalhealth.com](mailto:DrStephanie@otterwellmentalhealth.com)

### **Psychological Services**

It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and client, and the particular challenges you hope to address. There are many different methods your provider may use to deal with those challenges. Psychotherapy requires a very active effort on your part. For therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things you and your provider talk about both during your sessions and between sessions.

#### Potential Risks:

- Discussing unpleasant aspects of your life may result in uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness
- Sometimes you feel worse before you start to feel better

#### Potential Benefits:

- Improved relationships
- Solutions to specific challenges
- Significant reductions in feelings of distress

There are no guarantees as to what you will experience. You have the right to terminate services at any time.

**First Few Sessions.** Your first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, your provider will be able to offer you some first impressions of what your work together may include and collaborate on a treatment plan with you, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions about whether you feel comfortable working with your provider. At the end of the evaluation, your provider will notify you if they believe they are not the right therapist for you and, if so, will give you referrals to other practitioners whom they believe are better suited to help you.

Therapy is not a “quick fix.” It involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy. If you have questions about your provider’s procedures, you should discuss them with your provider whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, your provider will be happy to provide you with referrals to another mental health professional or agency.

OtterWell Mental Health LLC does **not** provide the following:

- After-hours coverage or crisis counseling
- Therapy by text, email, or voicemail
- Therapy with couples, families, or youth (under 18)
- Comprehensive psychological assessments and evaluations
- Professional opinions about relationships, parenting, custody, employment, disability, criminal behavior, mental status or cognitive functioning
- Involvement in legal proceedings
- Letters for time off work

#### **Appointments**

Sessions are usually scheduled for one 50-55-minute session per week, at a time you both agree on, although frequency and length may vary. It is your responsibility to arrive to your session on time. If you are late, your appointment will still need to end on time.

## **Cancellation Policies**

You are responsible for your scheduled appointments.

Cancellations with 48+ hours' notice will not be charged a cancellation fee.

Cancellations with 25-47 hours' notice are charged 50% of the scheduled session fee;

Cancellations less than 24 hours' notice or a no-show (defined as not arriving within 15 minutes of your scheduled appointment time) are charged 100% of the scheduled session fee.

Note that insurance doesn't typically reimburse for cancellation or no show fees. Your file may be closed, and you may no longer be eligible to re-engage in therapy at this practice if:

- You miss 3 sessions in 60 days
- It has been 30 calendar days since your last session without prior arrangements
- You have cancelled or rescheduled multiple appointments
- You have an unpaid balance on your account for more than 60 days and/or fail to make payments as agreed upon

## **Professional Fees & Billing**

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless otherwise agreed upon. Payment must be made by card and you will be required to keep a copy of your card on file. This is the card that will be charged for all fees.

The hourly fee for telepsychology is \$230. If you meet for longer than the usual time, your provider will charge accordingly. If there is a technological failure and you and your provider cannot resume the connection, you will only be charged the prorated amount for the actual duration of the session. My fee for other professional services is \$200, billed in 15-minute increments, plus any additional costs incurred (supplies, transportation, etc.).

## **Unpaid Balances**

If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, OtterWell Mental Health LLC has the option of using legal means to secure the payment and may pause or terminate services with you. OtterWell Mental Health LLC reserves the right to use an attorney or collection agency to secure payment. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim.

## **Insurance Reimbursement**

At this time, OtterWell Mental Health LLC is not on any insurance panels and does not bill insurance directly. If that changes, your provider will let you know.

## **Out-of-Network Insurance Benefits**

If you have insurance, it may cover some out-of-network mental health treatment. OtterWell Mental Health LLC can provide you with a superbill for you to request insurance reimbursement. We can also provide invoices for services paid for you to submit to Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) and Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) at your request. Ultimately, you, not your insurance company, are responsible for full payment of your provider's fees at the time of service. Check your insurance booklet for details on mental health coverage, and call your plan administrator.

***You understand that, by using your out-of-network insurance benefits, you authorize OtterWell Mental Health LLC and your provider to release such information to your insurance company. Your provider will try to keep that information limited to the minimum necessary.***

### **Contacting Your Provider**

You can reach your provider by phone. While your provider is not often immediately available, you can leave a voicemail. They check their voicemail at least twice per workday and will make every effort to return your call within one business day, with the exception of non-workdays, weekends, and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform your provider of the times when you will be available. They are usually in their office between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday-Thursday.

If you are unable to reach your provider and feel that you cannot wait for them to return your call, contact your primary care provider (PCP). See the "Crisis Resources" section of this document for more information. If your provider will be unavailable for an extended time, they will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

### **Electronic Communication Policy**

The use of electronic communication methods is very common in our society, regardless of whether the relationship is social or professional. Many of these forms of electronic communication put your privacy at risk and can be inconsistent with the laws and standards related to mental health professions. This policy has been created to assure the security and confidentiality of your treatment and to assure that it is consistent with ethics and the law.

### **Email Communications**

At OtterWell Mental Health LLC, we use email communication **only with your permission**, and only for administrative purposes. This means that email exchanges with your provider should be limited to things like setting and changing appointments, minor billing matters, and other administrative issues.

Please do not email or text your provider about clinical matters because this is not a secure way to contact them. If you need to discuss a clinical matter with your provider, please feel free to

call them or send a secure message through the Jane client portal letting them know you would like to speak to them before or during your next therapy session.

**Email or any form of text messaging should not be used to communicate with your provider in an emergency.** Your provider will make every effort to respond to emails, texts, secure messages through the portal, and phone calls within one business day, except on non-workdays, holidays, and weekends. In case of an emergency, please utilize the options in the “Crisis Resources” section at the end of this document.

### **Text Messaging**

The best way to contact your provider through text-based communication is by using the Jane secure messaging feature in the client portal. If you still choose to send a text message to your provider outside of Jane, please limit the communication to administrative subjects, such as cancelling or rescheduling an appointment. Because text messaging is an unsecure mode of communication, your provider would prefer you **do not send text messages** to their number even though their phone number can receive them. If you contact your provider via text message, you consent to use text messaging as a form of communication.

### **Phone Communications**

All therapy sessions are provided via video conference through our HIPAA-compatible platform, Jane. OtterWell Mental Health LLC uses a HIPAA-compatible phone service called RingRx. You may leave a confidential voicemail for your provider by phone at any time. If you are experiencing a crisis, please utilize the following:

### **Crisis Resources**

I understand OtterWell Mental Health LLC and my provider are limited to scheduled telepsychology sessions and are not equipped to offer crisis or emergency care between sessions. In the event of an emergency between sessions, if I am unable to speak with my provider, I agree to utilize local or national crisis lines, call my PCP, dial 911, or go to the nearest emergency room.

- National Crisis Line (call or text): 988
- Local County Crisis Lines:
  - Multnomah County: 503-988-4888
  - Clackamas County: 503-655-8585
  - Washington County: 503-291-9111
- Call 911
- Go to your nearest emergency department
- Alcohol & Drug Helpline: 1-800-923-4357
- Military Helpline: 1-888-457-4838

- David Romprey Oregon Warmline: 1-800-698-2392 (Intentional Peer Support or IPS)

### **Social Media**

OtterWell Mental Health LLC and our providers do not communicate with, or contact, any of our clients through social media platforms like Bluesky, TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), etc. In addition, if your provider discovers they have accidentally established an online relationship with you, they will cancel that relationship. These types of casual social contacts can create significant privacy risks for you.

Your provider may participate on various social networks, but not in their professional capacity. If you have an online presence, there is a possibility that you may encounter your provider by accident. If that occurs, please discuss it with your provider during your next session. At OtterWell Mental Health LLC, we believe that any communications with clients online have a high potential to compromise the professional relationship so our providers do not engage in them. Please do not try to contact your provider in this way or interact with their social media content. Your provider will not respond and will terminate any online contact no matter how accidental.

### **Websites**

OtterWell Mental Health LLC and our providers have a website and professional directory listings that you are free to access. We use them for professional purposes to provide information to others about OtterWell Mental Health LLC, our providers, and our practice.

### **Web Searches**

OtterWell Mental Health LLC and our providers will not use web searches to gather information about you without your permission. We believe this violates your privacy rights; however, we understand that you might choose to gather information about OtterWell Mental Health LLC or your provider in this way. There is a great deal of information available about individuals on the internet, some known and some inaccurate or unknown to the individual. If you encounter any information about OtterWell Mental Health LLC or your provider through web searches or in any other way, please discuss this with your provider during your time together so that you both can address it and the potential impact it may have on your treatment.

### **Web Reviews**

It has become more common for clients to review their health professionals on various websites. Mental health professionals are not able to respond to such comments or reviews due to confidentiality restrictions. Generally, we prefer clients to discuss their concerns directly with their provider. If you have concerns or questions about any aspect of your work with your provider or about any previously posted online reviews of OtterWell Mental Health LLC or your provider, please let your provider know so that you can discuss them together. We recommend

that you do not rate your work with your provider on any website for several reasons. If you rate OtterWell Mental Health LLC or your provider's work on a website while you are in treatment with them, it has the potential to affect your therapeutic relationship with your provider. If you choose to post an online review about your provider or OtterWell Mental Health LLC while you are in treatment or afterwards, please keep in mind that you may be revealing confidential information about your treatment.

Thank you for keeping this in mind and for letting your provider know about any concerns you may have.

### **Meeting Outside the Office**

If you see your provider outside of your session, they will not acknowledge you unless you acknowledge them first. Your right to confidentiality and privacy is of utmost importance to your provider, and they do not want to jeopardize your privacy. If you choose to acknowledge your provider, they may speak briefly to you but will not engage in lengthy interactions in public, nor should either of you discuss any clinical concerns outside of your therapy sessions.

### **Confidentiality**

In general, the privacy of all communications between a client and a psychologist is protected by law, and your provider can only release information about your work to others with your written permission. But there are a few exceptions.

- **In legal proceedings.** A judge may order your provider's testimony, and your provider must comply with that court order. Your provider and OtterWell Mental Health LLC also have the right to provide information that will help in their defense if you bring a complaint against them.
- **In cases of suspected abuse.** For example, if they believe that a child, older adult, vulnerable adult, or an animal is being abused or neglected, or has been abused or neglected in the past, they may be required to make a report to the appropriate agency.
- **Harm to yourself or others.** If your provider believes that you are threatening serious bodily harm to yourself or another person, they may be required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for you.
- **Consultation with other providers.** Your provider may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, your provider makes every effort to avoid revealing the identity of their client. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during your professional relationship with OtterWell Mental Health LLC and your provider.

CLIENT SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_