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## **PRACTICE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

### **General Information:**

Iredell Psychiatry is an adult outpatient psychiatric and psychotherapy practice. Our providers provide outpatient services at Iredell Psychiatry and consulting services at Iredell Memorial Hospital. However, our providers do not have admitting privileges at any psychiatric inpatient facilities. In the event that psychiatric hospitalization becomes necessary as part of your treatment, you will be referred to an in-network, inpatient adult psychiatry unit for admission with plans for you to resume outpatient visits at Iredell Psychiatry after your discharge.

When your provider is out of the office for vacation or business, Mobile Crisis and County Mental Health may be asked to provide coverage for emergency issues for Iredell Psychiatry.

If you are already established with a psychologist or psychiatrist in the community, please notify that provider of your intent to schedule an appointment in this office. Please allow 60 minutes for an initial psychiatric assessment, 20-40 minutes for a psychiatric follow up session, and 45-60 minutes for a psychotherapy session.

This office provides care for patients who are age 6 and older. To avoid conflict of interest, we do not accept patients if their immediate relatives are established patients in this practice.

### **Patient Compliance:**

This office reserves the right to terminate services with patients who do not comply with recommended treatment plans.

### **Services NOT Provided:**

This office does not provide social work, ACTT services, community support services, or case management. This office does not provide disability evaluations or disability ratings. This office does not provide DUI assessments, anger management class, or court-ordered psychiatric services.

If your psychiatric illness requires the experience of a psychiatric specialist, you will be given a referral for those services.

### **Appointments:**

Patients are to be seen by appointment. Walk-ins are not permitted. Appointments should be made in advance at time of checkout or by phone by calling (704) 380-3620.

Your scheduled appointment time represents the time you are to be seen by your provider. Due to our check-in process and required paperwork during each visit, you are asked to arrive in advance to your scheduled time. You are asked to arrive a minimum of 30 minutes prior to your first appointment and a minimum of 15 minutes in advance for your follow-up appointments. If you do not arrive prior to your scheduled appointment time or if you are late for your visit, you may be asked to reschedule.

We make every effort to stay on time for our patients. There is a possibility that emergent issues may arise in the office beyond the provider's control. If this occurs and the provider is running late, the office will do its best to notify you of any delays. In the event that the provider is behind and you cannot wait, please notify our front desk staff so that you may be rescheduled.

### **No-Shows and Cancellations:**

The office requests that appointment cancellations be made by phone at least 24 hours in advance of any scheduled visit. Missing **3** appointments, either no show or late cancellation, prior to establishing care with our office may result in our right to refer you to another provider for your care. Missing **5** appointments, either no show or late cancellation, as an established patient with our office may result in our right to refer you to another provider for your care.

### **Inclement Weather:**

If you are unsure about the weather conditions for safe travel, please call the office at (704) 380-3620. If the office has to be closed due to weather, a voice recording will be posted on the clinic's answering machine notifying patients of clinic closings. Please do not put yourself at risk by trying to make an appointment in inclement weather. Last minute cancellations for inclement weather will not be counted as no-shows. If the weather in your area causes you to cancel your scheduled appointment, please be courteous and let us know that you need to reschedule so that we are not waiting on you.

### **Telephone Calls:**

If you need to call during business hours, staff will take a message. We will do our best to return calls within 24 hours.

Our office must have written consent from you to be able to speak with anyone who may call on your behalf requesting information or requesting to speak with your provider.

Depending on the complexity and nature of your call, you may be asked to schedule a face-to-face appointment to discuss concerns rather than discussing issues on the phone. Please note that medication changes and psychotherapy will not be provided over the phone.

**Prescription Refills:**

This office will work with your pharmacy for prescription refills. You are asked NOT to call the office requesting refills, but instead to have your pharmacy fax refill requests to our attention. Please allow up to 48 hours for refill requests to be received and processed by our office.

Refills for certain medications cannot be called in to pharmacies and may require a hard-copy paper prescription.

These prescriptions may be picked up at our office during business hours.

If you frequently cancel or no-show your appointments, you will not receive authorized refills until you are seen for a recheck. Specifically, if you have not been seen in our office in the last 90 days, refill requests may be refused pending your face-to-face- reassessment with your psychiatrist.

Refills will not be called in when the office is closed after hours, over weekends or during holidays. You are asked to plan ahead to avoid running out of your prescribed medications. This practice reserves the right to refuse refills for patients for any reason.

**Controlled Medications:**

Patients who receive controlled prescriptions are asked to sign a Non-Narcotic Controlled Substance Contract with this office.

Early refills of controlled medications will not be provided.

The office will be monitoring the NC Controlled Substance Reporting System for patient who are prescribed non-narcotic controlled medications by this office.

Controlled medications or prescriptions that are lost or stolen will not be automatically refilled. You may be asked to provide proof of having reported to the police any stolen medications in order to receive future refills from this office.

This practice also reserves the right to refuse controlled medications to patients for any reason.

**Fees/Insurance/Billing:**

Iredell Psychiatry will file insurance for patients. You are encouraged to check with your insurance provider in advance of your appointment to review your mental health benefits, deductible and to ensure that this practice is in-network with your insurance provider.

Iredell Psychiatry will file all types of insurance for our patients. We do have a discount program available for uninsured patients called a 'sliding scale' program. This bases the patient's fees on the amount of income and the number of people living in the home. Our staff will assist you to determine your eligibility. You can also fill out and bring this Sliding Scale Application with you to your visit.

Your protected health information will be used, as needed, to obtain payment for your health care services. This may include certain activities that your health insurance plan may undertake before it approves or pays for the

health care services we recommend for you such as: making a determination of eligibility or coverage for insurance benefits, reviewing services provided to you for medical necessity, and undertaking utilization review activities. For example, obtaining approval for a hospital stay may require that your relevant protected health information be disclosed to the health plan to obtain approval for the hospital admission.

**Confidentiality and Medical Records:**

You have a right to have access to your records and may receive a copy when you provide this office with a written request to obtain your records.

This office will NOT release ANY information to any person or agency unless you give the office specific, written permission to do so. Your written permission is needed to release information regarding your psychiatric diagnosis, medications, prognosis, and treatment plans to insurance companies, employers, worker's compensation, attorney offices, case managers or for disability claims. Please be aware that this office cannot discuss anything in person, over the phone or in writing with your spouse or family without your written authorization. Please make your family aware of this privacy policy.

This office cannot confirm nor deny that any person is a patient in this office without a release of information.

Your medical records and personal information will remain confidential. Iredell Psychiatry staff will have access to necessary medical and logistical information on a "need to know basis" for billing, collections, prescription refills and scheduling issues. There will be times when a consultation with another healthcare professional is clinically indicated. Additionally, coordination of care with your primary care physician or referring provider is encouraged. You will be asked for consent to coordinate care with any consulting or referring provider.

**Privacy Exceptions:**

Please understand that there are some important and necessary exceptions to the rules of confidentiality. These exceptions include but are not limited to the following:

1. This office is required by law to report and suspected child or elder abuse/neglect or any suspected abuse/neglect of an incompetent adult.
2. If during treatment, you make any direct threat to a specific person or entity, this office has a legal duty to warn that individual/entity of your intent and plan.
3. If a patient is believed to be a danger to themselves or others, the office must take appropriate steps to prevent harm from occurring. On occasion, this may mean disclosing information if the situation is urgent and if it is believed that the patient or someone else is in imminent risk of harm.
4. On occasion, the office may need to share specific information about your medications with your pharmacist to ensure safe prescribing. Additionally, your insurance provider may require a diagnosis or description of symptoms for certain medications to be authorized or approved.

5. This office may be required by court order from a judge to release your records. If you do not want your psychiatric records released, this office will do its best to attempt to appeal the request.

**Crisis Issues:**

If you are an established patient and you have an urgent issue during weekday business hours, you may contact the office and we will do our best to schedule you for a same-day work-in appointment.

If you are an established patient and you have an urgent issue after business hours, on a weekend or during a holiday, you may call the office at (704) 380-3620 and the answering machine will direct you to the emergency after-hours operator at Iredell Memorial Hospital. Please understand that the after-hours number is not to be used for medication refill requests or non-urgent issues.

In the event of a crisis or psychiatric emergency, you should go to the closest emergency department or call 911 for immediate assistance.

Please do not use the Patient Electronic Health Portal or email to relay crisis information for emergency needs. Crisis or emergency issues should be called directly to the office.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Daymark Mobile Crisis can be reached for psychiatric emergencies at 1-888-235-4673.

Iredell Psychiatry requests that you retain this set of practice policies for your personal reference. We also request that you sign the Acknowledgement of Practice Policies form in your intake packet confirming your receipt and understanding of these policies.