



## Office Policies

### Office Hours

Practice hours vary from clinician to clinician. Office staff is generally available Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. For non-urgent telephone calls after hours, you may follow the voice prompts to leave a message and every effort will be made to return your call as quickly as possible the next business day.

### Initial Evaluation

Your first meeting with any clinician is an Initial Evaluation. During this initial session, the clinician will gather information and make an assessment. At this point you are not yet considered to have entered into a treatment relationship, and the clinician may determine or recommend that he or she is not able to treat you, and/or that it is in your best interests to receive treatment in a different setting, at a different level of care, or with a different provider. In the case of psychotherapy, this initial evaluation period may span the first one to three sessions.

### Billing and Insurance

All payments are due at the time of service. The patient is responsible for payment in full unless the clinician is a participating provider in your insurance plan. If the clinician is a participating provider, your insurance requires this office to collect a co-payment and/or coinsurance at the time of service. For your convenience, the office accepts cash, checks and major credit cards. There will be a charge of \$35.00 for each returned check.

It is the patient's responsibility to notify this office of any changes in address, telephone number(s), and/or insurance coverage. We cannot accept responsibility for any denial of payment due to lapse or change of coverage and you will then be responsible for full payment.

The patient is responsible for contacting their insurance company and/or the division that manages their mental health benefits prior to the first appointment. If pre-authorization is required by your plan and is not obtained, then you could be responsible for the full amount of the bill at the time of service.

### Scheduling, Cancellations, & Missed Appointments

We encourage you to schedule your priorities carefully and remember that few things are more important than your mental and physical health. Therefore, it should be the rare exception that you are unable to keep a scheduled appointment.

When you must cancel an appointment, however, we require that you notify us as early as possible, but not less than 24 hours in advance. Because the appointment time is being reserved for you, less than 24 hours notice or simply not showing up at all for a scheduled appointment without notice will result in your being charged the full fee for the service you were scheduled to receive.

Three consecutive cancellations and/or no shows will be considered non-adherence with treatment. As a result, you will be discharged and your file will be closed.\*

At the conclusion of a visit, your clinician will indicate when you should next follow up and it is your responsibility to schedule and keep this follow-up appointment. If you do not make it to an appointment, it can be difficult to schedule one quickly at the last minute. If more than three months have elapsed since your last appointment, this office cannot continue to be responsible for your care. Your file will be closed and you will be discharged.\*

### Prescription Refills

When calling in for a prescription refill, please have all information ready including the Patient's name, Medication name, Dosing, Pharmacy name and telephone number. Certain medications cannot be phoned into your pharmacy and will require a written prescription that you will have to pick up at the office or, in certain exceptional circumstances, may be able to be mailed to you. It is the patient's responsibility to allow ample time for prescriptions to be ordered and filled. Please do not wait until the last minute when you are out or about to run out of medication and expect us to be able to respond immediately. Generally we order enough medication to last at least until your next scheduled appointment, so if you are running out before that, it could be because you have missed appointments and have not followed through. Again, it is your responsibility to follow through with appointments and make sure that your medication supplies are adequate. Requests for refills may be left on the refills line of our office voice mail or may be done through our web site at [www.arogaonline.com](http://www.arogaonline.com).

### Emergencies

An emergency condition may include, but is not limited to, medication complications, side effects, allergic reactions, dangerousness to self, others, or property, thoughts of self-harm, or other medical or psychiatric crisis situation.\*\*

Aroga Medical Associates, PC maintains an on-call schedule and someone will be available to respond to emergencies and/or crises 24 hours a day

7 days a week. Nonetheless, if you have a true emergency situation, you should always proceed to the emergency department of the nearest hospital and/or call 911 in addition to calling us.

In the event that such a situation arises outside of regular business hours, an emergency extension is available from the main number of our office voice mail. Messages left on this extension will activate the pager of the on-call clinician. This extension is to be used for emergencies only. There may be times when, due to vacations or other absences, another clinician from an outside practice may provide emergency coverage. In these cases, the name and telephone number or instructions on how to contact the covering clinician(s) will be made available on the recorded telephone announcement of our office.

### Disability

Mental health disability, regardless of the term, can be a complicated issue and determination of disability is a process. Disability is not automatic simply because you have entered treatment. We do not make any promises to complete disability forms or excuse anyone from work unless it is the decision of your treatment team that you are truly unable to work and there is a real benefit to you being away from work. Making such a determination usually requires more than a single visit and may also depend on your adherence to treatment recommendations.

### Telephone Contacts

With the exception of true emergencies, telephone contacts with your clinician are generally billable and may be charged at the clinician's regular fee. Telephone encounters other than emergency calls, whether scheduled or unscheduled, may be billed at 15-minute intervals according to the particular clinician's fee and are usually not covered by insurance.

### Forms, Copies, Etc.

Because our practice is subject to the financial constraints of reduced fees imposed upon us by managed care and insurance plans, we are forced to charge a nominal administrative fee to cover our costs for copying, completing forms, composing or writing letters, or other similar administrative tasks that may become necessary during the course of your treatment.

### Therapeutic Relationships

The relationships you develop with the various members of your treatment team will involve trust, sharing of personal and sensitive information, and, at times, a considerable degree of emotional vulnerability. Because of this level of psychological intimacy, it is common and natural for you to sometimes develop strong feelings, either positive or negative, towards your clinician. It is often

therapeutic and helpful to discuss these feelings with your clinician if they arise. You must remember, however, that the relationships between you and your clinician(s) are strictly professional. You should not expect to interact socially with your clinician, invite them out or to your home, or to other social activities. You should not ask or expect them to relate to you in any way other than in the professional context of your treatment.

We treat our patients/clients with the greatest respect and dignity at all times and we expect that you will return this consideration. Any comments, requests, gestures, or overtures directed at the therapist and/or staff that are considered inappropriate will result in immediate discharge from treatment.

#### **E-mail and Internet Messaging**

Secure, confidential e-mail messages can be sent through our web site at

[www.arogaonline.com](http://www.arogaonline.com).

E-mail must **NEVER** be used to communicate an emergency condition (see section entitled "Emergencies"). Your clinician and/or Aroga Medical Associates cannot be responsible for responding to an emergency in a timely and appropriate fashion if it is communicated in the form of an electronic message. Instead, the telephone and emergency system must be used for this kind of situation.

Lastly, our position on the use of e-mail in treatment is that it is appropriate only as an adjunctive communication tool between you and your clinician and cannot be a substitute for face-to-face sessions. E-mail communications may be billable and are generally not covered by insurance.

#### **Public Encounters**

There may be times when you encounter your clinician in a public place such as a supermarket, shopping mall, theater, etc. In order to respect your privacy, we will not greet you or make any public acknowledgement of your association with us. Please do not interpret this as coldness or indifference towards you, but rather as respect for your privacy. If you choose to initiate an interaction by saying hello, then your clinician may respond appropriately but will never discuss clinical material in a public place.

#### **Notes & Letters**

If you choose to write notes and/or letters to your clinician during the course of your treatment, they will become part of your clinical record. Your clinician has scheduled time for you during regular sessions and cannot promise that he or she will have additional time available to read lengthy notes and letters in between sessions. All important, clinically relevant material should be shared with your clinician orally during scheduled sessions.

Written notes and letters must **NEVER** be

used to communicate an emergency situation (see section entitled "Emergencies"). Your clinician and/or Aroga Medical Associates cannot be responsible for responding to an emergency in a timely and appropriate fashion if it is communicated in the form of a written letter or note. Instead, the telephone and emergency system must be used for this kind of situation.

#### **Gifts**

Your relationship with your clinician is strictly a professional one and bringing gifts or personal greeting cards is generally not appropriate and is discouraged. Please do not be offended if your clinician cannot accept these items.

#### **Confidentiality**

Please refer to our separate Privacy Policies document for full details regarding use and disclosure of protected health information in accordance with HIPAA laws.

You should be aware that Aroga Medical Associates uses a collaborative treatment-team model and, internally within the group practice, information about you may be shared freely between members of the treatment team if it is felt that this is necessary for or will help your treatment.

In the event that a friend, family member, spouse, significant other, or anyone else contacts us, we cannot and will not identify you as a patient/client nor discuss anything about you unless you have given prior consent.

If you wish to have a family member or significant other informed of your treatment and/or progress, we ask that you designate one individual as the contact person rather than have us attempt to communicate with several different people, as this gets cumbersome and confusing for all involved.

In the event of an emergency such as dangerousness to self, others, or property, protecting you and/or others from harm always takes precedence and, by law, confidentiality may be broken (See separate Privacy Policies).

We reserve the right to change any of these Policies. They are effective in their entirety as of April, 25, 2012.

\*We will usually make an effort to contact you by telephone and/or mail and provide you with resources to find a new provider if necessary. We will be available to you for emergencies and prescription refills for a limited time until you can obtain an appointment with a new provider.

\*\*Please note that when you become a patient, you are making a contract with your therapist and/or psychiatrist to immediately report any thoughts, feelings or impulses you may have to harm yourself or someone else. We are available 24/7 to respond to a crisis or emergency and you are agreeing that

you will do your part to contact us **BEFORE** acting on any such thought, feeling, or impulse. We are here to help, but we must rely on you to be honest and forthcoming about such issues at all times.

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