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**Psychotherapies – Exploring informed consent**

Student Name  
Institution  
Course Name & Number  
Instructor  
Due Date

### **Psychotherapies – Exploring informed consent**

#### **What is the purpose of informed consent?**

Informed consent in psychotherapy is a practice that obligates the therapist to provide the information necessary for the client to make a decision. The code of professional counseling ethics and practice laws mandate that all clients in a counseling relationship be party to the informed consent as an assurance that the client understands the nature and process of psychotherapy services being provided. In addition, it ensures that the client is aware of the therapist's policies on practice payment, and confidentiality (Pope & Vasquez, 2016). While informed consent is always required when establishing a counseling relationship, there are three exceptions when it would not be required. The first exception is when the psychotherapy services are mandated by government regulations or law, such as a court ordered psychiatric evaluation. The second exception is when the informed consent is implied because the psychiatric service is conducted as a routine organizational, institutional or educational activity, such as when the client voluntarily agrees to be assessed as part of a job application. The third exception is when the psychiatric service is intended to evaluate the client's decisional capacity (Pope & Vasquez, 2016).

The information contained in an informed consent include the name of the psychiatric condition, name of the treatment, procedure or service that was recommended, risks and benefits associated with the service, and risks of other decision options that include not getting the service. A client signing an informed consent has four implications. Firstly, it indicates that the client has received all the information about the psychiatric service being provided. Secondly, it shows that the client understands the information and had an opportunity to ask questions. Thirdly, it shows that the information provided was used to decide whether or not to proceed with receiving the service that has been explained. The client could decide to only receive part of the recommended psychiatric services. Fourthly, a signed consent form shows that the client agrees to receive all or some of the recommended service options (Welfel, 2016).

It becomes clear that the main purpose of an informed consent is to protect both the client and therapist since it is a legal document that ensures there is an ongoing communication process between the client and therapist. Also, it implies that the therapist provided all the information about the service options and that the relevant information was comprehended and used to choose the option the client felt was right. Addition, it shows that the client or an authorized agent voluntarily made the final decision, and had the capacity or ability to make that decision. Besides that, it protects the therapist by acting as a record of the client's consent and participation in the decision process. Furthermore, the informed consent empowers the client, fosters collaboration in the relationship, reduced risk of harm or exploitation, and promotes ethical practices (Novalis, Singer & Peele, 2020).

#### **What are the main components of informed consent?**

An informed consent has seven main components. The first component is a description of the recommended psychiatric service. The second component is the associated risks and discomfort. The third component is the associated benefits. The fourth component is alternative services or procedures/treatments. The fifth component is confidentiality. The sixth component is compensation and fees. The seventh component is contacts. The final component is voluntary participation (Food and Drug Administration, 2019).

#### **Example of an informed consent form**

##### **Source:**

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5abed873e2d0940d001398a/t/5b76da55352f53dff1094df5/1534515797950/Intake+%26+Informed+Consent.pdf>

### References

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<https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/informed-consent>
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- Pope, K. S., & Vasquez, M. J. T. (2016). *Ethics in psychotherapy and counseling: a practical guide* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Welfel, E. R. (2016). *Ethics in counseling & psychotherapy: standard, research, and emerging issues* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cengage Learning.