

**INTEGRATED HEALTH CENTER
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REINTEGRATION THERAPY AGREEMENT

Welcome to Integrated Counseling, most families seeking reunification services are, or have been, in the midst of a stressful transition. We understand that it takes courage to begin the process of creating a new normal for your family and that different family members may have different thoughts and feelings about beginning reunification services. We hope this document will help answer some of your questions so that you feel more confident taking the step toward healing for your family. Because we understand documents of this nature can be difficult to understand at times, we would be happy to speak with you to discuss any remaining concerns that could help you make the decision about whether our services are the right fit for your unique circumstances at this time.

This document contains important information about our professional services and business policies. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you read them carefully. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us and become a part of your electronic medical record. You may revoke this Agreement in writing at any time. That revocation will be binding on us (and our clinic) unless we have taken action in reliance on it; if there are obligations imposed on us by your health insurer in order to process or substantiate claims made under your policy; or if you have not satisfied any financial obligations you have incurred.

1. Description of Reunification Services:

Reunification is NOT an evaluation or a process that will result in legal or custody recommendations as we are acting as providers for reunification. We may make *therapeutic recommendations* related to the therapeutic process itself. Reunification services IS a process by which families can build healthy and connected relationships in the midst of difficult transitions, particularly in situations in which one parent has not had regular contact with the child(ren). The hope of reunification is that it will result in re-establishing a parent/child relationship which may look different for each family.

We use a specific model of reunification services which we have found to be most effective with families that have prolonged conflicts and complicated clinical issues, which are common in families seeking reunification services. At times, both parents may be required to participate in the reunification process, as both affect the outcome of the process for the child(ren).

Unlike other traditional therapy models, the role of the family Reunification/Reintegration therapist becomes a dual role; Therapist for the family and advocate for the children. When Reunification Therapy (RT) is warranted, it usually begins where there is a significant amount of stress and turmoil in the family. Using an integrative approach to family therapy the Reunification therapist enters the process with the belief that children need and deserve a healthy relationship with *both* parents. This can be a complex and difficult process as parents typically present with a family system of communication and events which have eroded the ability of one or both parents to nurture and facilitate this need. Such is the case in high-conflict divorces or separations where there are allegations of sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse of the children, domestic violence, or abuse of alcohol and drugs (many times these issues overlap). The presence of any of these issues typically results in one parent assuming the role of protective parent, and the other becoming estranged or absent from the child's life.

Integrative Family Therapy; A framework for reconciliation and healthy co-parenting

Integrative Family therapy is strength based method of therapy that integrates the tenants of Solution-focused therapy and Structural Motivation therapy. This approach to psychotherapy focuses on solution-building rather than problem-solving alone. It explores current resources and future objectives rather than centering solely on past causes. This model is useful in cases where parents have been estranged from their families due to incarceration, military deployment, abuse, addiction or high levels of parental animosity.

In each case, the reunification therapist considers a variety of aspects in order to facilitate the reunification process including: how to improve functional communication, how to structure the therapy sessions including family member participation; identifying barriers; intake of family history and past issues; types of visitation ordered; inventory of family strengths and abilities, and assessing the motivation of participants.

During the assessment process the reunification therapist meets with each parent separately in order to gain a deeper level of understanding as to the issues that led to the estrangement. Together we will review the steps of the reunification process, and ask each parent to give consent for the children to participate. This stage requires working with the custodial parent to discover what they need in order to embrace the participation and involvement of the estranged parent in the reunification process. At this appointment, each parent will be expected to sign releases of information for all current providers they are working with (therapist, psychiatrist, etc.) and all relevant past providers whose information would be useful in accessing readiness and treatment planning. Education is also provided as it is fundamental to helping parents recognize the benefits of having both parents involved in their children's lives as well as understanding the long term mental health effects of children who have been estranged from a parent.

The next step is for the children to meet with the therapist, either together as siblings or individually. The provider will assess the children's readiness for contact with the reunifying parent, and assist the children to prepare for upcoming encounters with this parent. All efforts are made in this process to proceed at an appropriate pace for the child (which may be different for each child). This does not mean, however, that the child always chooses when the first contact with the reunifying parent will occur. Sometimes when children have been estranged from a parent for an extended period they become anxious about resuming contact and must be encouraged to have this first encounter. This will not occur until the provider deems that they are psychologically ready for the encounter, however.

Once the treatment plan has been established, the integrated approach to therapy begins. At times, initial sessions may be conducted via phone or Skype with the estranged parent based on the family history and comfort level of the child. The estranged parent and child(ren) will address past history, reasons for separation, and future intent. During those sessions the PT emphasizes the validation of individual feelings while also structuring intervention techniques so parties can gain empathy for the others past experiences and behaviors. The RT encourages the family to explore past triggers and pain but minimizes the labeling of those behaviors as "right or wrong." Because past memories are often incongruent between the family members it is important to acknowledge and address past experiences while simultaneously finding commonality between the child and parent. By acknowledging each person's own perspective, it empowers participants to avoid deeper conflict and allows the family to move into a more solution focused environment. As the family begins to generate workable dialogue, therapeutic intervention continues with the children and the estranged parent adjusting current and future expectations around reconciliation and what a possible future relationship could look like.

It is important during the reunification process to include the custodial parent who may also be engaged in therapy, through separate sessions. Those sessions will focus co-parenting and the strengths of the family system. The intent allows for custodial parents to feel more confident moving beyond the past and increasing their comfort and trust in the reunification process. By taking a pro-active stance, the therapist will be able to guide both parents toward consideration that parental approaches may be different from their own. Commonly in relationships of high conflict, when a parent feels threatened by the others actions or

behaviors, they may find comfort recounting those experiences. Perhaps the parent behaved in a manner that was not in the best interest of the children. It is imperative to understand the concerns while also emphasizing the need for positive co-parenting so that the children can ultimately realize healthy esteem. With all change comes loss; if a parent has assumed full responsibilities for a considerable time frame, they now have to grieve the loss of their time, their schedule, and their efforts to raise the children on their own. It is beneficial to acknowledge and validate the feelings associated with that loss.

Provided reconciliation progresses, the reunification therapist may recommend that the child(ren) and the estranged parent engage in outside supervised/unsupervised visits to ensure positive progress is being made. Early on it is very common for children to exhibit negative emotional reactions or behaviors just before visitation or when returned to the familiar parent. Such behaviors may include derogatory statements about the other parent, refusing to go to the visit, or irritability or moodiness. Children often engage in these behaviors to demonstrate loyalty to the familiar parent (often subconscious), and it helps them process confusing information. Negative behaviors and emotions are also considered a normal aspect of child development. It is important that both parents keep an open mind rather than assuming that something “bad” is happening on the other end. Outside visits are an opportunity for the reunification therapist to address ways in which parents may be contributing positively or negatively to the relationship moving forward.

2. Psychological Services:

Diagnosis and Billing: SOME reunification services may be considered psychological services and be billable to medical insurance. When a member of the family participating in reunification services is experiencing psychological symptoms, such as anxiety, reunification can be an effective intervention that is used to alleviate those mental health symptoms. In such cases, insurance will be billed using an appropriate diagnostic code. **It is important to note that children often do not qualify for a mental health diagnosis and their sessions will mostly likely not be covered by insurance.** At the time of intake, we will help you determine whether any of your services will be considered reunification services and able to be billed to your health insurance, or whether your services will need to be covered out-of-pocket.

Like all reunification services or coaching services, reunification is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the provider and clients, and the particular problems you and your family are experiencing. There are many different methods we may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address.

Risks and Benefits: Reunification is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. It can have benefits and risks. Since reunification services often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you and your children may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, anger, or frustration. Also, reunification services are often difficult for family members, particularly parents, because it requires that each person put aside hurt feelings and past history to work toward what is best for the child(ren). Even though it is tempting to use the process to get retribution or vindication, reunification requires parents to give children the freedom to build a relationship with the other parent free of interference or negative influence. When successful, reunification has also been shown to have many benefits. It often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Alternatives: There may be viable alternatives to reunification services, or other services (such as but not limited to support groups, domestic violence treatment, chemical dependency treatment, group therapy, individual therapy, family-based interventions outside of reunification services, etc. that your family could benefit from in addition to reunification services. There may also be times when one of those options may be best to complete before or during reunification therapy. In that event, we may make recommendations for additional treatment.

3. Fees:

The fees for reunification sessions are \$125 per 50 minute session, and \$190 for 90 minutes. If you are involved in legal proceedings that require participation from your provider, you will be expected to pay for professional time even if the providers are called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge \$125.00 per hour for preparation and attendance for any legal proceedings; including travel to and from the court hearing and wait time before or after the court hearing. This also includes report writing for a court proceeding, meetings with attorneys, CFI's, PRE's, custody evaluators, review of case documents/correspondence and phone consultations with any party greater than 10 minutes.

4. Billing and Payments:

Please initial the option below that accurately describes each parent's obligation for payment of the reunification fees. In any scenario, if eligible, both parents may provide insurance information in an effort to have insurance help cover the costs of the reunification services.

1. _____ The parent named here _____ will pay 100% of all reunification costs, including all sessions and communication with either parent and sessions with the children.
2. _____ The parent named here _____ will pay for their own individual sessions, plus all fees for sessions with the children and consultations between the providers. The other parent (_____) will pay only for his or her own individual sessions and communication with the reunification providers.
3. _____ The parents will divide the costs of the sessions by_____.

CREDIT CARD AUTHORIZATION

I understand I am welcome to pay for my services in cash or check, or use my Visa, MasterCard or Discover debit or credit card. I understand Integrated Counseling follows the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) requirements designed to ensure that all companies that process, store, or transmit credit card information maintain a secure environment for financial data.

_____ I am choosing to authorize ICH to store my credit card information within their electronic record keeping system using Complete Merchant Solutions, LLC's (CMS) file vault and charge any copays or session fees on the date of service.

I understand that if I fail to make payments owed for attended sessions, if I do not attend a scheduled session, or if I cancel a session less than 24 hours from the start time of the session, and do not make the required payment(s) within 7 business days, IHC, LLC has my permission to charge the card listed above according to the Cancellation Policy/No-Show Policy below. I understand that if I am having difficulty paying I can speak with my therapist about alternative arrangements.

6. Unpaid Fees: If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days, we have the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court which will require us to disclose otherwise confidential information. In most collection situations, the only information we release regarding a client's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim.

7. Insurance Reimbursement:

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health insurance policy and a diagnostic code that

these services can help address, it will often provide some coverage for mental health treatment. However, policies vary widely in regard to coverage for this type of family reunification services. We will provide you with whatever assistance we can in helping you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; however, **you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of our fees.** It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers.

You should also be aware that your contract with your health insurance company requires that we provide it with information relevant to the services that we provide to you. We are required to provide a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes we are required to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of your entire Clinical Record. In such situations, we will make every effort to release only the minimum information about you that is necessary for the purpose requested. This information will become part of the insurance company files and will probably be stored in a computer. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, we have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. In some cases, they may share the information with a national medical information databank. We will provide you with a copy of any report we submit, if you request it. By signing this Agreement, you agree that we can provide requested information to your carrier.

8. Missed Appointments: Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control). It is important to note that insurance companies do not provide reimbursement for cancelled sessions.

Charges for missed appointments or late cancellations will be paid by the parent missing/canceling the appointment, if the fees are shared between the parents. A session is considered missed if the parties have not arrived 15 minutes after the start time of the session.

No Show Policy: Should a client have three no show/no cancellation occurrences, the client will no longer be allowed to schedule future appointments. However, should the client desire to continue therapeutic services, the client may call in the morning he or she wishes to have an appointment and request a same-day appointment. If the clinician has availability in his/her schedule, the client will be given the opportunity to obtain the appointment slot.

9. Release of Reports and Summaries: Frequently, one or both of the parents, or the court, requests a report or summary of the family's progress in reunification services. Be aware that any such summary will need to include information about all participants in this process. By signing this agreement, you give consent for the other participants in reunification services to receive this information about your participation. Written reports and summaries, if needed, will not be released until all fees have been paid in full, including the cost of preparing the written report or summary. Either parent may request a written summary or report at any time and that parent will be responsible for the cost of preparation.

10. Suspension of Services: The reunification providers reserve the right to suspend all services, including provision of any written documentation, until payment of any unpaid balance.

11. Limits on Confidentiality: Federal and state law, as well as ethical codes protect the privacy and confidentiality of both your identity as our client and the information you share with us. You should be aware that we practice with other mental health professionals and that we employ administrative staff. In most cases, we need to share protected information with these individuals for both clinical and administrative purposes, such as scheduling, billing and quality assurance. All of the mental health professionals are bound by the same rules of confidentiality. All staff members have been given training about protecting your privacy and have agreed not to release any information outside of the practice without the permission of a professional staff member.

In reunification services, the client is the entire family, **so it may be necessary to the process for the providers to share information between family members. By signing this agreement, you give consent for the providers to do so.**

Under the rules governing mental health professionals in Colorado, a provider or counselor, and employees and professional associates of the provider, must not disclose any private information that the provider, employee, or associate may have acquired in rendering services except as follows:

- When state law mandates the report of suspected abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult or prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol.
- When failure to disclose the information presents a clear, present, and imminent danger to the health or safety of any individual (including but not limited to threat of suicide or homicide).
- When records are subpoenaed by the courts or other regulatory agencies, including the following:
 - When the person, employee, or associate is a defendant in a civil, criminal, or disciplinary action arising from the reunification services. If a client files a complaint or lawsuit against us, we may disclose relevant information regarding that client in order to defend ourselves.
 - When the patient is a defendant in a criminal proceeding and the use of the privilege would violate the defendant's right to a compulsory process or the right to present testimony and witnesses in that person's behalf.
 - If a government agency, pursuant to their lawful authority, is requesting the information for health oversight activities, we may be required to provide it for them. Also, if a client identifies a health professional and discloses that the health professional has violated his or her ethical code when treating a client/patient, including but not limited to initiating sexual contact with a client/patient throughout the term of treatment or within two years of the termination of treatment, the appropriate board must be notified.
 - If a client files a workers' compensation claim, we must, upon appropriate request, disclose information related to the claim to appropriate individuals, which may include that client's employer, the insurer or the Department of Labor and Industry.

If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning the professional services we provided for you, such information is protected by the privilege law. We cannot provide any information without your (or your legal representative's) written authorization, or a court order. If you are involved in or contemplating litigation, you should consult with your attorney to determine whether a court would be likely to order Ascend to disclose information.

I understand the provider is required to participate in legal proceedings when court-ordered, and I understand the provider's fee for involvement in legal proceedings.

ACCEPTANCE AND SIGNATURES

PARENT SIGNATURE

I have received and read a copy of the Reunification Services Agreement, and I have addressed any questions I have about the process or payment. I agree to proceed with reunification services at Integrated Counseling, LLC and consent to the participation my children named here:

_____ in this reunification process as well.

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Parent Name: _____

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