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## **SERVICE AND FEE AGREEMENT FOR REUNIFICATION THERAPY SERVICES**

Information concerning Wynns Family Psychology's (WFP) forensic psychology services, financial arrangements, and policies and procedures

Thank you for the opportunity to work with your family. Please excuse the length of this form. However, the complexity of these services necessitates detailed coverage of WFP's policies and procedures. Be sure to let the WFP professional working with your family know if you would like clarification or have questions about the terms contained in this document.

**\*Note:** *The information in this form pertains to reunification therapy services. Please check the [WFP website](#) for information about other services. You may also call WFP's main office in Cary and speak to a WFP staff member.* This document is a supplement to the [WFP Mental Health Services Agreement](#).

**Types of Forensic Services Offered** (Please visit the WFP [website](#) for a comprehensive fee schedule relating to the services listed below):

- Custody Evaluations/Parenting Plan Consultations  
([http://wynnsfamilypsychology.com/Portals/16/forms/1st\\_Appt\\_Form\\_Custody\\_Consult\\_Cary\\_Psychologist.pdf](http://wynnsfamilypsychology.com/Portals/16/forms/1st_Appt_Form_Custody_Consult_Cary_Psychologist.pdf))
- Court Testimony/Deposition/Settlement Conferences
- Forensic Risk Assessments
- Parent Coordination
- **Reunification Therapy**
- Supervised Therapeutic Visitations
- Supervised Visitations
- Expert review/consultations for law firms

**Provider Qualifications** - Wynns Family Psychology's forensic team includes doctoral level psychologists and licensed mental health professionals with the appropriate education and/or training, to deliver quality court-related services. You may access the WFP [website](#) to learn more about the professionals on the forensic psychology team. The professionals at Wynns Family Psychology are independent contractors and have a contractual relationship with Dr. Kristen Wynns, Ph.D., PLCC, owner, d/b/a Wynns Family Psychology.

## **DESCRIPTION OF REUNIFICATION THERAPY**

Reunification therapy is a relatively new therapeutic intervention that has been gaining popularity in family court. This intervention is a form of family therapy, which occurs between parent and child when there has been a rift in the parent-child relationship. This rift in the parent-child relationship may culminate in the child's refusal to have a relationship with their parent. There are many factors that may have contributed to the rift in the parent-child relationship and the goal of this therapeutic intervention is to restore the connection between

parent and child. It should be noted that a child's expressed affinity for one parent over another may not always signal support for the existence of parental alienation.

It is recommended that the clinician conducting reunification therapy have the education, training, and experience to work with high conflict parents, families who are court-involved, maintaining therapeutic boundaries, and the ability to maintain objectivity throughout the course of the therapy.

If reunification therapy has been court ordered or recommended, it is typically because there are significant problems between parents, and in the parent and child relationship. Although reunification therapy is challenging for the whole family, it is our experience that the parent-child relationship is more likely to be restored if each family member consistently understands and agrees to the expectations for their role.

**Role and Expectation of Each Family Member:** Both parents are instrumental to the success of reunification therapy. Therefore, each parent has an important part to play in supporting a child in the reunification process.

***The custodial parent*** - The custodial parent is the parent who currently lives with the child and is typically in a good relationship with the child. This parent is often having to manage their own, as well as their child's concerns about reunification therapy. This parent plays an important role in the success of the therapy. ***The custodial parent supports the reunification process by:***

1. Scheduling the child's appointments in a timely manner, at the frequency recommended by the reunification therapist, and/or as ordered by the court.
  - a. Do communicate to your child that reunification therapy attendance is mandatory. Do communicate your support for reunification therapy through your actions (for example, use normal disciplinary actions for refusal to attend - grounding, losing privileges, etc.).
  - b. Do talk to the reunification therapist if your child is resistant to attending sessions and work with the reunification to find appropriate solutions.
2. Respecting the confidentiality and privacy of the child's therapy sessions.
  - a. Do not engage in discussions with the children about what occurred in therapy or coach the child about what to say in session.
  - b. Do remind your child that reunification therapy is an opportunity for them to build a relationship with the reunifying parent.
  - c. Do not discuss your concerns about reunification therapy with your child.
  - d. Do schedule an appointment with the reunification therapist to discuss any concerns you may have.
3. Encouraging the child to follow all recommendations of the reunification therapist, and trust that the reunification therapist is going to consider your child's emotional well-being, safety, and happiness.
  - a. It is common for children to experience some anxiety, anger, and mixed feelings about reunification therapy.

***The reunifying parent:*** The reunifying parent is the one who has the problematic relationship with their child and is often, though not always, the parent who is requesting reunification services. This is the parent who has often not seen their child for some time and is using reunification therapy as a tool to rebuild the relationship, as in many cases is attempting to resume visitation with their child. Like the custodial parent, this parent plays an important role in the success of the therapy. ***The reunifying parent supports the reunification process by:***

1. Keeping in mind the current difficulty in the parent-child relationship and that it is likely that reunification therapy cannot change things overnight.



2. Being patient and trusting that the reunification therapist will move things along at a pace appropriate to the specific circumstances of the case.
  - a. Do follow the reunification therapist's recommendations and allow the reunification therapist to follow the steps for reunification therapy.
3. Accepting feedback from the child about how you may have contributed to problems or hurt the child feels. Follow the reunification therapist's recommendations about when to send written communication or be available for phone, telehealth, or in-person sessions.
  - a. Do not be defensive or place blame on the child or the other parent.
  - b. Do listen to the child and be open to seeing things from the child's perspective.
  - c. Do apologize sincerely, when necessary, and reassure your child you wish to make amends and earn back their trust.

***The Child*** - Children and teens often do not wish to attend reunification therapy. They have often been hurt by the reunifying parent, and sometimes have negative beliefs about the reunifying parent. They are often adamant that they do not want or need a relationship with the reunifying parent. ***Reunification therapy will be more likely to succeed if the child:***

1. Attends therapy sessions as recommended by the reunification therapist.
2. Comes to therapy with an open mind, ready to consider that the other parent is not "all bad" in the same way that their custodial parent is not "all good." Be open to thinking about the situation from a new perspective and be open-minded about therapy helping to heal past hurts.
3. Trusts that the reunification therapist has their best interest at heart and will only make recommendations when the therapist thinks they are ready (the child may not feel that way, but that's where the trust comes in). Follow the reunification therapist's recommendations, and understand that typically small steps, and not drastic ones, will be taken while supervised by the reunification therapist..
4. Respects the confidentiality and privacy of their therapy sessions, agreeing not to discuss the therapy session with the custodial parent or other siblings who may have a challenging relationship with the reunifying parent but not participating in reunification therapy. It is best if the child focuses on their individual relationship with the reunifying parent.

**The Reunification Therapy Process:** Wynns Family Psychology uses the following framework as a guideline for reunification therapy:

**Phase 1:** Initial intake meeting with custodial parent, Initial intake meeting with noncustodial parent, 2-4 individual meetings with the child, and review of materials. *Additional sessions with the child may be required depending on the history and reason for the parent-child relational problem.*

**Phase 2:** Joint sessions with the reunifying parent and child to improve communication, heal past hurts, establish goals for healthy relationships, and re-establish a positive connection. *The number of sessions can vary from 6-20+ all depending on how severe the problems are and how supportive the other parent is of the process.*

**Phase 3:** Sessions may be spaced out or scheduled "offsite" at a variety of locations, so the parent and child can have more natural interactions (at parks, museums, restaurants etc.).

**Phase 4:** The reunification therapist can help provide feedback to parents, attorneys, or judges regarding visitation and custody, and whether reunification therapy is needed anymore.

**The Job of the Reunification Professional** - The reunification therapist strives to be objective when working with your family. The reunification therapist is not on “team mom” or “team dad.”

During the reunification therapy process, the reunification therapist will utilize various techniques, tools, and strategies to facilitate change. *The reunification therapist may:*

- empathize with and validate the child’s feelings at times and at other times challenge the child to think and behave differently.
- monitor the reunifying parent’s behavior and recommend changes.
- as ordered and/or applicable, provide updates to the Court or attorneys about the progress of therapy and all parties’ adherence to these guidelines and recommendations.

While both parents and children have valued opinions, reunification works best if the reunification therapist makes decisions about treatment (e.g. how often meetings occur, when meetings progress from in office to out of office).

In many cases, there is also a court order which has ordered reunification therapy and designated the reunification therapist as the one to direct the sessions and recommend further contact. Therefore, if one parent unilaterally decides to terminate before it has been recommended by the therapist, the reunification therapist may be required to write a summary letter to the Court and attorneys explaining the circumstances causing the therapy to cease.

**Communication with Parents** - In general the reunification will have limited communication about clinical matters via email.

- If a parent has specific concerns, that parent should email the reunification therapist, with the other parent copied, to request a time to meet or to schedule a phone call.
- The reunification therapist may provide brief updates via email about the next stages in the reunification therapy process.
- When the reunification does communicate via email, those communications will be sent to both parents (each parent cc’d). It is also expected that both parents will “reply all” when responding.

**Communication with Third Parties** - On occasion, it may be necessary for the reunification therapist to communicate with a third party (i.e. lawyer or another professional). Both parents will be asked to sign a release of information form to provide the reunification therapist with permission to speak to the third party. If the communication is with an attorney, it is WFP policy to communicate with both parties’ attorneys jointly (either by email or other form of virtual communication). Please note that each parent responsible for billing will be charged for these third-party communications.

**Important Information About WFP’s Court-Related Services**

- The professionals at WFP cannot provide legal advice. Therefore, the professional services provided should in no way be construed as legal services or giving legal advice.
- None of the services or educational materials WFP provides, including parenting plans/custody services, and/or any written materials WFP creates should be construed as legal advice, legal information, or the practice of law.
- No service that Dr. Kristen Wynns, PhD or the professionals contracting with WFP provides, whether written or verbal, constitutes legal advice/information. Therefore, the court-related services provided should not, in any way, be construed as legal services, legal advice, or the practice of law.

- **Confidentiality**: There are numerous limitations to confidentiality in reunification therapy:
  - Both parents are required to sign releases for both attorneys at the start of treatment.
  - If you sign a release form for us to speak with other professionals or non-professionals, that information may be subject to re-disclosure by a recipient of such information.
  - Information may be disclosed to the court, your attorney, or the opposing side's attorney, during legal action. Once disclosed, the privacy of the information will no longer be protected under federal medical privacy law.
  - Professionals working with your family may, at times, consult with other WFP professionals as needed.
  - As mental health providers, our forensic team members are required by law to report allegations of abuse or neglect, and this reporting must not be interpreted as a display of support for the individual who made the allegations or against the person being accused, or as an indication that the psychologist finds the allegations credible.
  - There is no confidentiality between parents. For example, if one parent communicates information to the reunification therapist without copying the other, the reunification therapist will initially ask the sender of the email to repost it on a joint email. If need be, the reunification therapist may reply to the email, and cc the other parent.
  - Should the WFP professional working with your family be the subject to an ethics complaint, investigation, and/or legal action related to the services you received at WFP, then WFP and/or the professional may need to share the details of your case with a third-party, including but not limited to legal counsel, licensing board, or court in its/their own defense.
  - Recording devices are prohibited. However, your clinician may utilize a recording device for training purposes. If your clinician uses a recording device, they will notify you.



**PAYMENT/FEE POLICIES**

**Reunification Therapy Fees**

<i>Provider</i>	<i>Hourly Rate</i>
<i>Senior Psychologist</i>	<b>\$290</b>
<i>Doctoral Level Clinician or RT Specialist (Master’s Level Clinician with 2 or more years of reunification therapy experience )</i>	<b>\$255</b>
<i>Master’s Level Clinician</i>	<b>\$225</b>

**Court /Court-Related Fees**

<i>Provider Type</i>	<i>Type of Service/Activity*</i>	<i>Hourly Rate</i>	<i>Retainer Required</i>
<i>Senior Psychologist</i>	<i>Court Testimony, Other Court Testimony/Appearances (e.g. depositions, settlement conferences</i>	<b>\$450</b>	<b>\$2250 (minimum)</b>
<i>Doctoral and Master’s level clinicians</i>	<i>Court Testimony, Other Court Testimony/Appearances (e.g. depositions, settlement conferences</i>	<b>\$350</b>	<b>\$1785 (minimum)</b>

Note: Fees for depositions and testimony are billed to the requesting party unless the parties have reached a mutual agreement about payment for these services. All other services not covered above including, letters, email (reading and responding), telephone consultation (with yourself or others), etc., are billed at the hourly rate for the classification of the clinician who is working with your family.

**Payments**

- Each parent is individually responsible for all charges unless a formal agreement has been reached by the parties and proof of that agreement is shared with WFP.
- Each parent responsible for payment is required to sign a credit card authorization agreement at the start of services. The card left on file will be charged, as agreed to, at the completion of each therapy meeting.
- Each parent responsible for payment will be notified if a charge was not successful and asked to provide a different form of payment.
- Health insurance may not cover the cost of therapy services that are court-ordered or done for a legal purpose, as insurers may distinguish these from services that are “medically necessary.
- Payment for court, or court retainers may be paid only by money order/cashier’s check.

- Exception(s): 1. If a party needs to pay for a retainer for court less than seven (7) days before the court date, with limited time, credit card payments may be made with an additional 10% rush fee; 2. Final invoices may be assessed for additional fees accrued during the evaluation (e.g. additional collaterals). These amounts may be paid by credit card with a 4% convenience fee.
- A deposit of one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) of the hourly estimate (the minimum estimate is five (5) hours to include drive time, prep time, and court time = \$1750; \$875 to hold the date) must be paid upfront to hold the date for settlement conferences, depositions, or testimony. The balance is due seven (7) business days (note our business days include Saturday) prior to the date for the settlement conference, deposition, or testimony. Requests for court appearances less than one week from a court date, will be subject to an additional 10% “rush” fee added to the retainer.
  - Note: The minimum retainer for a Senior Psychologist is \$2250 (\$1125 to hold).
- Collateral time (reviewing documents, reading emails, phone calls to parents or collaterals is also billable time).
- Insurance coverage depends on your benefits. We are considered out of network for all plans, but many plans have reimbursement for out of network providers. We can help explain more how to submit claims or give you a cheat sheet so you can verify your benefits.

**Refunds:** There are **no** refunds for any reason. Deposits or retainers paid in anticipation of services are non-refundable even if a court date, settlement conference, or deposition, has been postponed or canceled. Wynns Family Psychology does not offer refunds if you are unhappy with the services WFP have rendered.

**Late Payments, Late Fees and Returned Checks:** Payment is due at the time of service.

- Late fees: If you do not pay in full on the date services are rendered, 20% of the original charge will be added *each week* you are late. If WFP does exercise its right to use a collection agency and/or file suit to collect fees past due, WFP will collect 100% for all fees WFP incurs from the collection agency, attorneys, and the court. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through a small claims court, which will require us to disclose information to the third-party collection agency such personal information including your name, address, phone number, services rendered, and/or the amount due.
- Returned fees: There is a \$35 fee for each returned check in addition to late fees.

**Cancellation Policy:** If a party misses a scheduled appointment, cancels a scheduled appointment less than 48 hours in advance, or is more than 15 minutes late for an appointment, they will be billed at their clinician’s hourly reunification therapy rate.

Please read, and where indicated, ***place your initials*** beside the statements on the following to acknowledge that you have read this document and agree to abide by its terms during your professional relationship with WFP:

\_\_\_\_\_ I authorize Kristen Wynns, PhD, PLCC, owner of Wynns Family Psychology, or one of professionals who contracts with Kristen Wynns, PhD, PLCC, to provide reunification therapy services.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read the information regarding fees and do not have any questions regarding my responsibilities; I agree to pay in full the fees noted in this agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the full fee is charged for missed or cancelled sessions, unless I cancel 48 hours in advance, and I agree to pay the full fee.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that WFP does not offer refunds for any reasons, including but not limited to, my dissatisfaction with any therapy session, written report, outcome of legal proceeding, or recommendations provided by Kristen Wynns, PhD, PLCC owner of Wynns Family Psychology and/or a clinician who contracts with Kristen Wynns, PhD, PLCC.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the WFP professional working with my family may need to consult with other professionals within WFP, and I give permission for these discussions. I understand WFP and/or the WFP professional working with my family may need to reveal details about my case to defend itself/themselves against an ethics complaint, investigation, and/or legal action.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand all materials I, or others, provided for review will not be returned to me. Therefore, I understand I should not provide my reunification therapist or other professional at Wynns Family Psychology who is providing me with services, any original materials.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand any holding fees I pay in advance for settlement conference attendance, depositions, or testimony are non-refundable deposits.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand all recording is prohibited, at any time, and by any party retaining the services of Kristen Wynns, PhD, PLCC, owner of Wynns Family Psychology, or any clinician contracting with Kristen PhD, PLCC. *I agree to not attempt to record all or part of communication where my WFP clinician is present regardless of the location (WFP offices or offsite) or type (in-person, virtual, or telephone) of contact.* I understand that the professional working with my family may wish to record the communications for educational purposes but will notify me and obtain my consent before recording any sessions.

***Please sign and date below to indicate you have read the preceding information in full and understand the information. Please ask for clarification of any information you are unclear about.***

By signing this agreement, I, the undersigned, attest to the following:

- I understand and have read the above document in its entirety and understand the terms of contractual relationship with Dr. Kristen Wynns or other independent contractors at Wynns Family Psychology.
- I agree to all the statements, and financial terms set forth herein.

**Client Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent 1:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Date

Contact Information:

\_\_\_\_\_  
email Phone

**Parent 2:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Date

Contact Information:

\_\_\_\_\_  
email phone