

Client Bill of Rights

An informational brochure regarding sexual misconduct, for consumers of massage and bodywork services.

This brochure has been prepared to better inform you about sexual misconduct in the health and wellness field. It delineates your rights as a consumer and tells you how to protect yourself if your rights are violated.

In this brochure, the client is defined as anyone who receives services for any therapy or health care. Sexual misconduct is defined as including sexual touching of the client by the practitioner and/or any activity or verbal behavior that is sexual in nature. Sexual contact includes a wide range of behaviors besides intercourse; it includes any behaviors that aim to arouse sexual feelings. They range from suggestive verbal remarks to erotic hugging and kissing, in addition to direct sexual contact. The behavior does not have to be coercive to be inappropriate.

What to Expect in a Massage or Bodywork Session

- You, the client, are in charge of what can occur in this session.
- You have the right to dress and undress in private.
- The practitioner should refrain from sharing personal information.
- You control how much pressure the practitioner uses.
- The genital region and female breasts are always covered and never massaged or touched (certain countries permit breast massage with specialized training and written, informed consent).

Broken Boundaries

Within the therapeutic relationship, it is always the responsibility of the practitioner, doctor, or health professional to set and maintain a professional boundary. It is not unusual or abnormal for a client to feel attracted to a healthcare practitioner who has treated them with kindness, care, and attention. However, for a practitioner to take advantage of this special vulnerability and to move the relationship into a social or sexual one, even if the client wants it, is always inappropriate and unethical. If this occurs, we can say that a practitioner is abusing his/her power within the relationship and is no longer able to put the needs and rights of the client first.

All types of therapy and healthcare services can be of invaluable help to many people. The vast majority of practitioners and health professionals practice in an ethical manner. Unfortunately, sometimes sexual misconduct does occur in treatment relationships. A sexually intimate relationship between a client/patient and a practitioner, physician, or healthcare professional is never appropriate and is a violation of professional ethics.

Consumer Rights

You have a right to:

- safe treatment, free from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.
- refuse treatment and not be pressured to continue.
- question any action that you experience as invasive or sexual.
- terminate treatment if you feel threatened.
- discuss your therapy/health care with friends outside of the therapy relationship.
- professional consultation with other practitioners to discuss your situation.
- report unethical and illegal behavior.

Warning Signs of Sexual Inappropriateness

- The practitioner makes sexual jokes or references that are inappropriate to treatment.
- You have any concern that a treatment relationship is moving from the professional to the inappropriately personal.
- The practitioner tells you his or her intimate personal problems.
- You are asked to go outside the bounds of a professional relationship such as going on a dinner date or a social meeting outside the office.
- The practitioner tells you that having a sexual relationship with him or her is good treatment and/or the only way you can get well.