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We are writing this letter to communicate changes being implemented by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida as of October 1, 2017, and the impact these changes will have on the services we provide here at LCS.

In June of this year, our office was notified by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida about a market analysis that was conducted on our region. Based on their findings, BCBS informed us that they would be changing their contract with mental health providers, including licensed mental health counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, and licensed clinical social workers. The most impactful changes to our provider contracts are the major reductions in reimbursement rates for frequently used mental health counseling codes.

The most significant rate change is a reduction in counseling services for 50-60 minutes (90837) for PPO policies by 35%. After seeking out additional explanation and clarity from BCBS and other sources, we believe that the rationale for this reduction based on the market analysis is that most other insurance companies, including Medicaid and Medicare, have determined that providing counseling services for 38-45 minutes (90834) is sufficient and within the realms of ethical clinical care. Therefore, the reimbursement rate BCBS has implemented for a 90837 and a 90834 will be equal as of October 1, 2017.

So what does this mean for you and for LCS?

First, we want to assure you that LCS is committed to providing continuity of services and comprehensive mental health care. We see the changes as an opportunity to improve how we offer services and align with best ethical practices. Because of the relatively short notice given to us, we have made several important decisions that will affect how we provide services.

The first and biggest decision is that, after much thought and dialogue, we have decided that **LCS will remain in-network** and hopefully work side-by-side with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida and their network administrator, New Directions Behavioral Health, as we adapt to the changes coming on October 1.

Our next decision is that, in order to avoid a 35% income loss for the 50 to 60 minute counseling session we have historically provided to our clients, we will begin providing counseling sessions for up to 45 minutes rather than 50-60 minutes. Also, due to the changing trend in mental health services and third party payers, this change will take place for **all LCS clients**, not just BCBS clients. Therefore, clients will be scheduled every 45 minutes for all counselors at LCS as opposed to every hour. This change will be effective September 15, and we will work diligently to help everyone adjust to the schedule changes.

Above all else, we are helping professionals. We are committed to serving our clients with diligence and the utmost care. As we continue to advocate for mental health services for all, we also acknowledge that we are choosing to work within a larger healthcare system. Although many of our colleagues in Gainesville have chosen not to continue accepting insurance and have moved exclusively to a self-pay model, that is not the direction we believe we are supposed to take at this point.

Although these changes initially caught us off-guard, we have devoted a great deal of time and energy into figuring out how to make these changes into a positive outcome for LCS and for our clients. One way we hope



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to do this is by thinking more creatively and thoughtfully about what each client needs, then expanding the services we offer to meet those needs. We will continue to provide clinical intakes, couples counseling, individual counseling, and family counseling, and we will also be incorporating supplemental services to our clients, such as diagnostic and non-diagnostic testing, clinical check-ins, and group therapy. Together with your counselor, we are asking each client to actively participate in his or her care and let us know how we can meet each person's needs more effectively.

Change is hard. We know that, and we feel it, too. We want to assure you that we are working on your behalf, and we care about you and your family. We want to hear from you. Please let us know your thoughts, comments or questions on this matter. We are humbled and honored to work with you, and we look forward to continuing to do so in the future.

Warmly,

The LCS Team