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# Scope of Practice Policy for Counseling Services

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## Executive Summary

### The scope of practice policy aims to:

- Define Brower Psychological services and ensure ethical, effective, and appropriate care.
- Delineate specialty in trauma-focused mental healthcare for emergency responders and their families.
  - Brower Psychological specializes in the culturally competent mental, emotional, behavioral, and relational healthcare of emergency responders. The specialty of Brower Psychological specifically addresses how work-related or personal circumstances, experience, and/or trauma may impact effective professional or personal functioning. Additionally, Brower Psychological supports responders' family members, age six (6) to adult, who may be impacted by their responder family member's work-related circumstances or experiences. Impacts for the responder or their family member(s) are addressed with short-to-medium term individual, couples, or family therapy.
- Distinguish services from typical EAPs and health insurance mental health coverage.

### Key Points:

- Provides short-term and medium-term outpatient therapy.
- Specializes in culturally competent care for emergency responders.
- Uses a variety of modalities to address work-related trauma and stressors.
- Does not treat intensive psychiatric conditions or provide long-term care.
- Makes prompt referrals when client needs are out of scope or exceed practitioner competencies.
- Services covered by employer contracts or private pay; does not take insurance.
- Determines treatment plans based on clinical judgment, not contract coverage or financial constraints.
- Bills private pay clients monthly based on \$150 per session rate.
- Can provide documentation for clients to request insurance reimbursement.
- Reserved right to modify scope of practice, as necessary.

### The policy establishes boundaries around:

- Presenting problems treated.
- Levels of care offered.
- Duration of treatment.
- Payment sources accepted.

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## General Information

In mental health care, “scope of practice” refers to the knowledge, skills, experience, and level of care needed for the provision of effective therapy and counseling services to clients, as well as the mental health concerns and conditions clinicians are trained and experienced in treating.

When a client’s presenting problem is outside of the scope of practice, there is an ethical responsibility to refer that client to a more appropriate provider and/or level of care. This is a requirement detailed in the ethical codes of psychologists, counselors, clinical social workers, and marriage and family therapists. This requirement exists to protect clients from substandard care. Similarly, when the client’s presenting problem is within the scope of practice, but the client, in the clinician’s professional opinion, is not benefiting from counseling, the clinician is ethically required to terminate counseling and offer the client a referral.

## Purpose

This policy defines the scope of services provided by Brower Psychological to ensure ethical, effective, and appropriate care.

## Scope of Practice

Brower Psychological counseling services offer specialized care not commonly available through typical employee assistance programs (EAP) or mental and behavioral health care provided by most health insurance policies. Similar to a traditional EAP, Brower Psychological counseling services are intended to provide brief therapy and are in addition to broader/longer term mental and behavioral health care provided under a health insurance policy. EAPs, including Brower Psychological, offers confidential support and resources for employees and family members facing personal or work-related problems. EAPs aim to help employees address issues proactively before they escalate or negatively impact health, relationships, or job performance.

The Brower Psychological difference is that our clinicians specialize in the culturally competent mental, emotional, behavioral, and relational healthcare of emergency responders. Brower Psychological counseling services specifically address how work-related or personal circumstances, experience, and/or trauma may impact effective professional or personal functioning. Additionally, Brower Psychological supports responders’ family members, age six (6) to adult, who may be impacted by their responder family member’s work-related circumstances or experiences. Impacts for the responder or their family member(s) are addressed with short-to-medium term individual, couples, or family therapy.

Therapeutic modalities and techniques commonly utilized at Brower Psychological include but are not limited to: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR); Attachment-focused EMDR Therapy (AF-

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EMDR); Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT); Positive Psychology; Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT); Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MB-CBT); Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR); Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT); Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT); Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT); Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT); Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB); Humanistic and Existential Therapy; Sand Tray Therapy; Play Therapy; and, Stages of Change.

Due to the specialty that delineates the scope of practice, scheduling priority is reserved for clients who experience or are directly impacted by Potentially Traumatic Events (PTEs) such as an Officer Involved Shooting (OIS), Critical Incident (CI), or other work-related call.

With the exception for trauma therapy (work-related, personal, relational), the scope of practice does NOT include intensive treatment for significant psychiatric conditions including but not limited to: suicidality; homicidality; substance use disorder or addiction; personality disorders; developmental/intellectual/relational disorders or disabilities; chronic, treatment resistant depression or anxiety; sexual dysfunction. Additionally, the scope of practice does NOT include long-term psychological or psychiatric care.

When a client presents with concerns outside of the scope of practice or a requirement for a higher level of care, the client will be triaged and referred to another provider for appropriate treatment. Whenever possible a referral to a specific, culturally competent provider or treatment center will be made.

## Levels of Care and Treatment Duration

Brower Psychological may accept clients for short-to-medium term outpatient treatment. Outpatient treatment with Brower Psychological may be self-referred by the client or following successful completion of any required higher levels of care. For high acuity concerns such as active suicidal ideation and/or substance use disorder/addiction, typical levels of care are as follows (listed in descending order).

- ❖ In-patient/residential treatment or hospitalization
  - Partial hospitalization program (PHP)
    - Intensive outpatient program (IOP)
      - Outpatient therapy

Brower Psychological provides short-term and medium-term outpatient therapy for individuals, couples, and families. Short-term therapy is up to 12 sessions while medium term therapy is 13-24 sessions. Brower Psychological treatment duration average is approximately eight (8) treatment sessions/client. For more information on the basis for the duration of treatment, please see the section on development of treatment goals and plans below.

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Intensive or long-term care for chronic conditions is outside our scope; prompt and appropriate referrals will be provided when possible.

## Development of Treatment Goals and Plans

The foundation of client care is the development of clinically appropriate treatment planning to address presenting concerns. Brower Psychological upholds ethical principles of acting in clients' best interest and providing standards of care that align with needs.

Treatment planning, including duration and therapeutic modalities, is determined based on clinical judgement of client needs. Development of treatment goals and recommended number of sessions to achieve those goals will adhere to ethical guidelines and best practices. Contract coverage terms dictating the number of allowed sessions per client, whether limited or unlimited, shall not guide treatment planning decisions.

Treatment planning and course of therapy will be documented accordingly when financial barriers prevent full implementation of clinical recommendations. Discussion of limitations and alternative options will be included, with priority on ensuring needs are still addressed, if possible, in other formats, when ideal treatment is restricted by coverage or ability to pay.

Before starting treatment, clinicians will meet with clients to understand the presenting concern that brought them to therapy and discuss the most appropriate level of care and treatment options. If Brower Psychological is appropriate, then clinicians will assist clients in defining treatment goals that can be reasonably achieved within a brief treatment model. Clinical judgment is used to develop a treatment plan including an anticipated number of sessions required to meet the treatment goals. Clients have the autonomy to consent to the treatment plan, deny it, or request a modification to the plan, if clinically and ethically sound.

Treatment goals will be monitored. Once treatment goals are met and no further progress in treatment can be made, clinicians will terminate with the client at that time. If a client needs to return to therapy at some future time, typically they may schedule with their same clinician, barring any extenuating circumstances.

## Payment Sources & Procedures

Brower Psychological clinical services are available to any active or retired emergency responder, veteran, or their family members with concerns that adhere to the scope of practice described herein. Brower Psychological does not accept health insurance but offers a reduced private pay rate for out-of-pocket clients.

As an EAP-type of mental healthcare provider, services at Brower Psychological are primarily provided through agency, department, district, communications center, or municipal contracts. Through these contracts, employers may offer direct pay or financial support for services to employees. As such, the contracting employer



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or municipality determines who is eligible for covered services and the allowed number of covered sessions available for each client.

If additional sessions beyond what the contract covers are clinically indicated, clients can continue services on a private pay basis at the reduced rate of \$150 per session. Clients who pay privately must complete a credit card authorization permitting a monthly charge for services rendered in the previous calendar month.

Clients can request a superbill for submission to their health insurance company for reimbursement. However, reimbursement is not guaranteed, as coverage varies by insurer and policy. It is the client's responsibility to understand their coverage and reimbursement procedures, as applicable.

### **Ongoing Practice Review**

Brower Psychological reserves the right to revise or modify the scope of practice policy and related procedures including private pay fee at any time.