Dialectical Behavior Therapy Program Contract
Guidelines and Participant Contract

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a research-based empirically validated treatment modality. The guidelines of the program and its foundation were established by Marsha Linehan. Originally, the treatment was developed for people with Borderline Personality Disorder. DBT has now been demonstrated to reduce symptoms for a variety of other disorders, such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, addictions, eating disorders, mood disorders, impulse control disorders, personality disorders, and for those with self-injurious and suicidal behaviors. In addition, DBT has been shown to reduce inpatient hospitalizations, and anger, as well as improve social adjustment. While we cannot make any guarantees, at Adolescent & Family Behavioral Health Services (AFBHS) our goal is to integrate this empirically validated treatment modality in order to reduce extended costs, hospitalizations, and assist people in improving their quality of life.

The primary aim of this program is to provide psychotherapy using standardized assessments and therapies with demonstrated effectiveness. In order to be able to determine whether a treatment we are providing is effective, we measure our clients’ improvement over time. For this reason, we make use of various assessments approaches (e.g., self-report and clinical interviews) in our practice.

To make DBT Skills Groups a successful experience, it is essential that the client be under the care of a primary mental health treatment provider (a primary therapist who sees you at least once per week) while participating in the program. DBT Skills Groups and phone coaching are not a substitute for the treatment provider for each client’s primary provider. It is also very important that each treatment provider for each client understands and agrees to the client’s participation in the DBT Skills Groups. In order to generalize skills training, clients will be asked to do specific assigned homework. These assignments are vital to your improvement during the course of therapy, and we will strongly encourage you to attempt to do them to the best of your ability. Each client has responsibilities, described below, that must be met if DBT is to be successful.

Individuals wishing to enroll in the DBT Program must make a long-term commitment to work within the guidelines of therapy, attend weekly skills training group therapy sessions, must be actively involved in weekly individual therapy by one of our therapists or an outside therapist who is committed to DBT skills training, and participate in family therapy as required (e.g., Family Matters Group and/or family therapy sessions). Parents of children and adolescents also must commit to participation in DBT Skills Group as well as the Family Matters Group. Spouses and other adult family members of the Women’s DBT Group are also encouraged to participate in family therapy.

Women’s DBT Group – 24 Weeks
Adolescents DBT Group – 24 Weeks
Tweens DBT Group – 16 Weeks
Kids DBT Group – 12 Weeks
Family Matter Group – 12 weeks (Part I-6 weeks, Part II – 6 Weeks)
Basic Principles of DBT Therapy Agreement

Therapy is based on the following unalterable principles

1. **Mutual Trust**
   My therapist and I are entering into this contract in a trusting manner. I need to trust that my therapist has made a commitment to work with me and will actually be available as per the terms and conditions of this contract. Similarly, my therapist needs to trust that I will maintain my commitment to the terms of this contract. Each party is responsible for maintaining that trust.

2. **Safety**
   I agree to commit to the goal of safety towards self and others. If there are concerns this cannot happen, my therapist and I need to have in place a clear safety plan that specifies the steps I, or others, need to take to ensure safety. At the very least, active pursuit of harmful behaviors to self or others robs me of the chance to remain committed to the current therapy goals and to learn more helpful ways of dealing with problems in life. By agreeing to do my best to keep others and myself safe I can have a better chance of helping myself apply the principles of DBT to my life. All participants in DBT therapy are expected to act in a way that does not endanger their therapist, family, or others (e.g., through threats or acts of violence against people or property). Such behavior may result in legal consequences or risk termination of therapy.

3. **Skills Training**
   Skills training are a central part of DBT. During the period of therapy, I will be expected to participate in learning DBT skills through individual therapy, skills group, and family sessions. Parents are expected to attend Family Matter Group Therapy for 6 weeks. DBT Skills group meets for ____ weeks.

4. **Role of Therapist or other providers**
   This contract neither replaces nor alters the key-working role of others. I understand that DBT makes a distinction between the roles of my other providers and my individual therapist. I understand my individual therapist (if at AFBHS) and DBT Skills Group facilitator will be seeking consultation through his/her consultation team.

5. **The ultimate goal of having a life worth living**
   I understand that the goal of this therapy is to not need therapy. Therefore, as I become more competent with my skills, and strive toward a life worth living, this will result in a decrease in the need for and dependency on my therapist. Although we will have developed a strong and positive therapeutic relationship, it is meant to be temporary and that is the goal. If this is not happening, there is something wrong and consultation will be sought.

The Aim of the Therapy Agreement

Therapy is about learning skills that increase my ability to have a life worth living. Therapy is not about immediately “feeling better.” In fact, a good part of DBT is about learning to be better at feeling my uncomfortable emotions in order to begin living a life worth living.

The target behaviors of DBT include:

1. **Eliminating behaviors that are harmful to self or others**
   I will work towards solving problems in ways that do not include intentional harm to others and myself.
2. **Eliminating therapy-interfering behaviors**
   I agree to work on any problems that interfere with the progress of therapy. Therapy is about working together and requires the participation of both my therapist and me. I agree to give feedback to my therapist on how I am finding therapy, especially if I am concerned about anything that occurs in therapy. Similarly, my therapist agrees to provide feedback on how they are finding therapy.

3. **Reducing quality-of-life interfering behaviors**
   I commit to actively engaging in the behaviors that are taught in the DBT training in order to improve my overall quality of life.

Increasing the following skills:

1. **Core Mindfulness**
   Mindfulness is the ability to practice being aware and accept one’s moment-to-moment experiences. Mindfulness teaches participants how to focus the mind, direct attention, and how to nonjudgmentally observe and describe what they are feeling and thinking in the moment. These skills can help people develop a more stable sense of who they are, and can help reduce reactivity to painful thoughts and emotions.

2. **Distress Tolerance**
   Distress tolerance skills teach participants how to effectively distract and productively soothe themselves while in the midst of their distress. These skills typically replace problem behaviors such as cutting classes, self-inflicted cutting, physical fights, and alcohol or drug abuse.

3. **Emotion Regulation**
   Emotion regulation skills address extreme emotional sensitivity, rapid mood changes, and other unregulated moods such as chronic depression, anxiety, or hostility. Examples of specific skills include learning to identify and label emotions, learning how to increase positive moods, and learning how to make yourself less vulnerable to negative moods.

4. **Interpersonal Effectiveness**
   Interpersonal effectiveness skills address participants difficulties in maintaining consistent and rewarding relationships by teaching skills such as how to ask for what you want, how to say no in a gentle yet effective manner, and how to maintain your sense of self-respect and independence in the face of external pressure.

5. **Walking the Middle Path**
   Parents and teens receive help with the dilemmas of choosing between leniency and authoritarian control, normalizing behaviors vs pathologizing behaviors, and forcing autonomy vs fostering dependence. Teens will also learn skills of self-validation and other forms of validation and principles of basic behavior change, including extinction, punishment, and reinforcement. Parents and teens will learn together in multifamily groups how to validate and effect positive change.
Modes of Treatment

1. Weekly individual
   Individual DBT therapists will help the client: 1) identify and maintain focus on the primary problems to be addressed; 2) stay motivated to work hard in treatment and apply new behaviors in their daily lives; and 3) coordinate and consolidate the different parts of treatment and make sure it is all tailored for the particular individual's situation.

2. Weekly skills training group therapy
   The class meets for one and a half hours each week over a _____ week period of time and typically includes 5–10 members. The sessions utilize lecture, discussion, and practice exercises in order to teach DBT skills. Skills training may also include individual sessions. Most people learn the skills most effectively if they complete the full set of skill modules 2 to 3 times.

3. Telephone coaching with the therapist
   Phone coaching is designed to promote skills use where it matters most – in the real world. When clients feel "stuck" and unsure what to do, they are encouraged to contact their individual therapist (if at AFBHS) or group facilitator for help in using DBT skills. Phone coaching typically occurs in a 5-10 minute timeframe where the individual’s therapist or group facilitator consults on how to utilize DBT skills. Calls should be made to the office during the weekday and the crisis line after 6pm weekdays or on weekends.

4. Family therapy
   Family therapy occurs on an as-needed basis to increase behavioral skill use within the family system, improve communication between family members, and to reduce family interactions that interfere with either the client’s or their family's quality of life.

5. Family Matters Group Therapy
   Survey data from their previous family led groups show that after completing the course, family members experience decreased feelings of depression, burden, and grief, and more feelings of empowerment. The group meets on Tuesday evenings from 6 PM – 7 PM (or 7:30 PM depending on the size of the group). There are two segments of the group, Part I and Part II. Each segment meets for 6 weeks. Parents are required to attend 6 weeks of group and have the option of attending additional weeks. Spouses and other adult family members are encouraged to attend Family Matters.

What you can expect from the Family Matters Group:
- To receive education and research about BPD
- To learn Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills
- To learn problem management skills and setting boundaries
- Share and hear family perspectives and experiences
- Parents, spouses, adult siblings, and other adult friends and family receive support
- To learn skills that will encourage your own emotional wellbeing, which in turn helps you to be more effective in communicating and supporting your family member.

   The one-hour consultation meeting is for DBT practitioners at Adolescent & Family. The DBT treatment team meets weekly to assist each other in providing effective and compassionate treatment. We spend time problem-solving difficulties that interfere with client progress in treatment and help keep each other practicing within a dialectical framework.
Fees
While many DBT Programs cost more than double our cost, we believe treatment is only treatment if the people who need it most can access the services so desperately needed. Think about the financial investment in this DBT Program and all of the potential benefits. Now think about the hidden cost of not committing to treatment (e.g., missed work, missed school, cancelled family outings or vacation, disrupted evenings, and increased anxiety). And what about the cost in trying the same things over and over that have not worked.

- Each DBT Skills Group is $50 per session. A payment of $200 must be paid in total for a 4-week month and $250 for a 5-week month. Your group meets for ______ weeks. Missed sessions are not refundable as a space has been reserved for you and cannot be given to anyone else.
- Each Family Matters Group is $50 per session for a 6-Week segment. A payment of $350 is due at the beginning of the month, or when you start the program. If you opt to continue with Family Matters after 6 weeks, the fee is $350 for another 6-Week segment. Missed sessions are not refundable as a space has been reserved for you and cannot be given to anyone else.
- Each individual session is $110 (MA) or $160 (PhD). Weekly individual therapy is a part of the DBT Program. Payment is due at each session for a total of ______ weeks. As a courtesy for our clients, we will bill your insurance for individual sessions; however, you are responsible for any portion not covered by your insurance. If you cancel without 24 hour notice or do not show for a session you will be billed the entire fee of $110 or $160.
- You are making a commitment to a DBT Program of _____ weeks and space has been reserved just for you and cannot be given to another client, the entire fee of the DBT Skills Group and Family Matters Group is due regardless of your completion of the program. More than two absences represents you having decided to drop out of the program. You may be allowed to re-enroll when the next DBT Skills Group begins.

Self-Harming Behaviors Agreement
If suicidal or other self-harm behaviors are a problem for you, reducing these behaviors will be a primary treatment goal. It is required that clients contract to reduce suicidal and self-injurious behavior; to work on behaviors that interfere with therapy; and to attend skills training groups and individual therapy weekly. By signing this contract, you agree to work toward solving problems in ways that do not include intentional self-harm or suicide.

Period of Therapy Agreement
Therapy will commence on: ________ and will end on: _________. Throughout this period, my therapist and I will review progress, which may lead to refining targets and goals. At the end of this period, the question of whether a further phase of therapy is needed will be discussed and may be implemented by mutual consent.

Frequency of Contact Agreement:
Individual sessions will occur weekly for 50-60 minutes, but from time to time, a session may be at different intervals depending on circumstances of either party and by mutual arrangement.

DBT Skills Group sessions will occur weekly and will take 1.5 hours for Adults and Adolescents. It is 1 hour for Tweens and Kids.
Family Matters Group will occur weekly for 6 weeks and will take 1 to 1.5 hours.
Homework Assignments and Participation Agreement

I agree to take responsibility for ensuring I bring my personal therapy folder and the latest homework assignments completed to each individual and group session because these will be a vital part of in-session work. In addition, I agree to complete the Skills Training/Diary Card on a daily basis. I agree to practice the skills to the best of my ability and to participate verbally in sessions to the best of my ability.

Attendance Agreement

I agree to attend scheduled individual and group sessions. It is not acceptable to miss sessions because I find them too uncomfortable or aversive, am not in the mood for therapy or tired, wish to avoid certain topics, or feel hopeless. I understand that it is important to attend every session, both for my own sake and for the success of the skills training group. Therefore, I hereby commit to attending every session unless I am prevented by circumstances beyond my control. We ask that each group member commit to attending all sessions of each module. The material offered builds from one session to the next. Please arrive on time as late arrivals are disruptive.

Absences

Absences detract from the group’s ability to work as a unit, and we encourage you to consider this group as a primary commitment. If you cannot attend, inform the facilitators with 24 hours notice, with the understanding that it is a courtesy for the facilitators and participants to know who will be absent to minimize any inconvenience to the therapist or group members. Similarly, my therapist will do their best to give me at least 24 hour notice if it has become necessary to re-schedule a session. If you know ahead of time that you will miss a meeting, please let group members know at the previous meeting.

You will be permitted one absence from DBT Skills Group per module. If you have more during any time frame, you will be dropped from the group. However, you will still be responsible for the cost of the group in its entirety and absences. Likewise, if you miss 2 scheduled individual therapy sessions without 24 hours advanced notice, therapy will be terminated.

Termination of Therapy Agreement

These are the conditions, due to absences, in which I cannot return to therapy until the end of the contracted period and then return is a matter of negotiation. This includes for reasons of prolonged hospitalization or illness. I understand I will have voluntarily dropped out of the DBT Program:

- If I miss 2 scheduled individual therapy sessions without 24 hour notice.
- If I miss more than one session of any DBT Skills Group module for any reason,
- If I do not maintain individual therapy with a primary therapist at AFBHS or elsewhere, I will no longer be able to participate in the DBT program.

Confidentiality

What is said in group stays in group. You may wish to discuss your own experiences in group with others, but the names of other group members and their experiences must be safely guarded. Confidentiality may be broken only if someone reports: Danger to oneself or to others, or Abuse of a minor or an elderly person. In either of these events, it will be the facilitators, not the members, who break confidentiality to report what was said to the appropriate people.
By signing below I am committing to the conditions of treatment of the DBT Program at Adolescent & Family Behavioral Health Services as described in previous paragraphs and below.

- I understand that I can request further clarification when I have a question regarding specific application of any parts of this authorization. I understand that I may speak with the DBT Program Director if I have any concerns.
- I am voluntarily requesting to be treated in the Dialectical Behavior Therapy Program.
- I understand that this program includes identifying patterns of reinforcement for behaviors that I want to change. It also requires that I take responsibility for my actions. There will be times when I will not get the response from therapists that I might have expected in the past, and this might increase my distress temporarily or put greater burden on others concerned about me.
- I agree to complete ____ weeks in the program.
- To attend the____ weeks DBT Skills Group on a regular basis, on time, and will remain throughout the entire group.
- As a parent or caregiver, I agree to attend the entire Kids or Tweens DBT Skills Group on a regular basis, on time, and will remain throughout the entire group. For the Adolescents DBT Skills Group, I will attend for the last ½ hour of the groups and remain throughout the entire 1.5 hours group on the first week and the last two weeks of group along with your adolescent.
- I agree to attend individual sessions for ____ weeks and family sessions (as needed) on a regular basis, on time, and will remain throughout the entire session.
- I agree to attend Family Matters group on a regular basis (6 weeks), on time, and will remain throughout the entire group.
- I give the staff of the Dialectical Behavior Therapy Program at AFBHS permission to contact my significant others (including my therapist, psychiatrist, and social worker/case manager, primary care physician involved in my treatment and family members), but I understand that I am personally responsible for conveying any essential information.
- I will not assume that AFBHS professionals involved in my treatment will pass important information along to others treatment provider, but I understand that they may do so when they feel it is necessary for their own supervision/consultation or my treatment.
- I agree to avoid coming to group or therapy under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I agree to complete the Skills Training/Diary Card on a daily basis and come to group or therapy prepared with my homework and therapy folder.
- I agree to keep information obtained during sessions, as well as the names of clients, strictly confidential.
- I agree to call the group leaders ahead of time when you will arrive late or miss a group.
- I agree to let the Group know in advance if I will not be in Group when I am aware.
- I agree I will not form social or intimate relations with other group members.
• I agree to pay my bill on time and in full. I recognize the full amount is due for the program regardless of my continuation in the program. Exception: I am allowed to attend the first four sessions and withdraw from the program without incurring fees for the entire program and be responsible only for sessions I have attended. The DBT Program prices below do not include the cost of individual or family therapy with your therapist.
  o Women’s DBT Program and Men’s DBT Program – $1200 ($200 per month for 6 months)
  o Adolescent DBT Program - $1500 ($250 per month for 6 months)
  o Tweens DBT Program - $1100 ($275 per month for 4 months)
  o Kids DBT Program - $900 ($300 per month for 3 months)
• Romantic partners may not be in DBT groups together.
• Physical violence, intimidation, or destructive comments are unacceptable.
• Individual therapist, DBT Skills Training Group, or Family Matters Group therapists may be telephoned when there is need for “coaching” to use DBT skills and the primary therapist is unavailable. Skills coaching is not a crisis call and generally takes 5-10 minutes. Clients are expected to have tried practicing skills before calling for coaching. Skill coaching availability is based on the therapist’s limits which may vary between therapists.

By signing below I am committing to the conditions of treatment of the DBT Program at Adolescent & Family Behavioral Health Services as described in all eight previous pages.

__________________________________________  ______________________________________
Client Signature                                                                 Parent Signature

__________________________________________  ______________________________________
DBT Skills Group Therapist Signature        Family Matters Group Therapist Signature

__________________________________________  ______________________________________
Individual Therapist Signature             DBT Program Director Signature