

# DBT CENTRE OF VANCOUVER, INC.

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Dear Loved One,

This letter includes important information about our services. This information may be helpful to you if you:

- Have a loved one who has told you that she or he is receiving services at the DBT Centre of Vancouver\*.
- Are interested in seeking services for your loved one at the DBT Centre of Vancouver.

The most important information thing for you to know is that we always aim to provide compassionate care based on strong scientific evidence and to respect the needs and wishes of our clients. We also understand that parents, caregivers, friends, and partners of people struggling with mental health problems often wish to have some involvement in their loved one's care. We are glad that this is the case, as support from loved ones can be of tremendous help on the road to recovery. As such, we would like to give you some information regarding how we work with loved ones.

## **1.) We must abide by all professional and ethical and legal standards regarding the confidentiality of client information.**

These standards apply to both minors and adults. To release information about any of our clients, including information about whether we know the client, we require written permission from the client. Therefore, if you wish to discuss the care of your loved one, we suggest that you ask whether she or he is willing to provide us with written permission to share information with you. We have a permission form, called a Release of Information Form, that our office manager is happy to provide as needed. Otherwise, unfortunately, if you contact us, we will be unable to provide any information or even acknowledge that we know your loved one. We recognize that this can sometimes be frustrating and confusing to loved ones who simply wish to help. As such, we often encourage clients to provide such permission when they initially seek treatment. If a client is unwilling to do so, however, we must respect his or her wishes in order to remain in compliance with professional standards and maintain a helpful and successful working relationship with your loved one.

## **2.) If we believe that your loved one is in imminent danger or at risk of harming self or others:**

We are able to disclose information to you (even without written permission) in order to take steps to protect your loved one. We must limit such disclosure to the minimal amount of information needed to help ensure his or her safety.

## **3.) At times, loved ones wish to speak with us to provide information about what they are observing in the client's daily life, to ask questions about treatment, or to provide suggestions.**

It is perfectly understandable if you wish to do so. Loved ones often have important insights and suggestions to share. At the same time, we believe it is important to empower our clients to effectively navigate their relationships and take a leadership role in their treatment. In fact, this is one of the principles of a treatment we often provide (DBT). Also, trust is an important feature of the therapeutic relationship. We have found that helping clients remain in charge of their own

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information and have input regarding their own care helps to enhance trust. Therefore, if you have questions about your loved one's care, we recommend that you first try to address these questions with her or him.

If you have information to share with us, there are many options. Perhaps start by asking your loved one to share this information. If you believe this is not working, you could also ask your loved one whether you can attend a portion of an upcoming therapy session. In such cases, we will again need written permission from the client, and you would need to provide us with written informed consent for your participation in the session. For any such meetings, we prefer to have the loved one present. This encourages your loved one to take an active role in her or his treatment, allows for direct communication between family members, and ensures that all parties are on the same page regarding our discussions. We also generally limit such meetings to once or twice a month in order to allow for sufficient time to focus on your loved one's treatment goals. If you contact us independently to request a meeting or share information, we will need written permission from your loved one to respond. We will also let your loved one know that you have been in touch with us.

**4.) We provide consultation for loved ones.**

We recognize that it is also sometimes beneficial for family members, friends, or partners to receive help and advice regarding how to best support a loved one. As such, you may also request a consultation with a separate provider here to discuss strategies to effectively support your loved one. Please keep in mind that the assigned provider cannot be your loved one's individual therapist nor will they provide any confidential information about your loved one and his or her care. These consultations are confidential, generally provided in 50 minute increments, and can include some of the following topics a) education on psychological disorders, b) tips for conveying understanding and concern to loved ones, c) suggestions for strategies to help your loved one change behaviour, and d) strategies to take care of your own needs.

**6.) We offer a 26 week DBT skills group for adolescents and their primary caregiver(s).**

This group is designed for adolescents aged 13 to 18 who struggle with persistent problems managing their emotions and other related issues including recurrent self-harm and suicidal behaviours, substance related problems, and other repeated troubles with impulsivity. The adolescent and up to two primary caregivers can attend the group together so that you can learn new strategies for coping with difficult situations side-by-side with your loved one. Your loved one's individual provider can give additional advice about its suitability for you and your family.

**7.) We also periodically provide a group geared toward loved ones.**

This 8-week group helps family members, friends, and partners to learn useful DBT coping skills and strategies. These are many of the same skills and strategies taught to our clients. The focus is on ways to use these skills to support your loved one, manage stress, and enhance your own self-care. If you are interested in this group, please contact our office manager to inquire about our next offering.

**8.) At times, loved ones might make changes in therapy that lead to temporary stress in their relationships.**

During therapy, clients sometimes learn new, effective ways to communicate their needs to loved ones, manage emotions, or make important changes in their daily activities. Some of the changes in your loved one's behaviour might require some degree of adjustment. You might not be used to your loved one speaking in a particular way, acting more assertively, using terms or phrases learned in treatment, and so on. These changes might demonstrate important progress. Clients are

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more likely to maintain progress when their loved ones are patient and supportive regarding these sometimes uncomfortable changes.

**8.) Progress sometimes proceeds unexpectedly.**

Progress in therapy is not like driving down a straight freeway. Often, there are twists and turns. Clients take exits that bring them back to where they started, get lost, and encounter new challenges. Also, learning new coping skills is challenging, especially if the client has been stuck in old patterns for a long time. Indeed, learning new ways to think and manage emotions is a much like trying to forge a new path through a thick jungle; it takes a lot of work and practice, and it's easy to become exhausted and demoralized. It is important to know that periodic setbacks are to be expected and don't mean your loved one isn't making progress. Indeed, clients can learn a lot from setbacks and bumps in the road. We will pay close attention to your loved one's progress in therapy. We regularly monitor the effects of our treatments, and if we have any concerns about progress, we raise these with our clients.

Please let us know if you have any questions about these policies. Finally, we have also included with this document, a fact sheet with some useful book references and other suggestions. We share a common goal to help your loved one improve her or his life, work toward important goals, and enhance well-being. With your support and understanding, we believe these goals are often achievable.

\*Disclaimer: This letter provides information about services offered at the DBT Centre of Vancouver. It is in no way is meant to imply or confirm that your loved one has or is currently receiving any services here.